An Antidote AGAINST Distractions.

OR,

An Indeavour to serve the Church, in the daily Case of WANDRINGS in the Worship of GOD.

By *Richard Steele* M. A. and Minister of the Gospel.

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Psalm 119. 10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander.*———

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Bernard. de inter. Domo c. 29. 33. Non cogitanda cogito, cogitata recogito, & eadem iterum iterumque replicare non cesso,——in choro sum corpore, & in aliquo negotio mente———Aliud canto, & aliud cogito, psalmodiæ verba profero, & psalmodiæ sensum non attendo: Væ mihi, quoniam ibi pecco, ubi peccata emendare debeo.

The Fourth Edition.

LONDON, Printed for *Ralph Simpson* at the *Harp* in St. *Pauls Church-Yard*, 1695.

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IMPRIMATUR.

Tho. Tomkins, R. R^mo *in Christo* Patri ac Domino, D^no *Gilberto* Divinâ Providentiâ Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi à Sacris Domesticis.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE
DEDICATION hereof
TO THE
Most Holy *TRINITY*.

THese first fruits *I humbly lay at thy blessed foot-stool, being ambitious of no other Patron but Thy Self; for, Thou alone canst attest the sincerity of my aim*

herein, which will plead with Thee for the imbecillities thereof: Thou alone art the right Author of every valuable line and word in this ensuing Tract. The Errata's only are mine, but the Honour's Thine. Thou hast the strongest hand, and truest heart to protect, both the Writing and Writer from all the malicious, or unkind usage, that we may meet with. Thy approbation chiefly I humbly crave,

crave, and then I am ſure to have all good Men on my ſide, Againſt Thee, Thee only have I offended by my Diſtractions, and done theſe evils in thy ſight; and therefore am bound to ſeek the Deſtruction of them, in all the World for Thy ſake. Thou haſt ſo infinitely obliged the unworthy Writer of theſe lines, that he rejoyces in this opportunity to tell the World, That there is none in

Heaven or Earth to be compared to Thee. *Thou only canst make my Indeavours herein successful, and bring that to the* Heart, *which I could only present to the ear or eye. Unto Thee therefore do I dedicate both this and my self, with this earnest Prayer, That this Essay may both please Thee, and profit thy Church! That thou wouldest take this Rod into Thy hands, and therewith*

whip

whip these buyers, and sellers out of Thy Temple! That Thy Great Name may hereby be magnified, though the Writers were never known! To Thy Heavenly blessing, do I most humbly recommend this mean Work, and worthless Workman, with a Resolution to remain while I have any Being.

Thine own,

Richard Steele.

To the ſerious Reader, eſpecially the firſt Hearers thereof.

Chriſtian Reader,

YOU have here an Antidote againſt the moſt common diſtemper of God's people in his Worſhip. My own diſeaſe cauſed me to ſtudy the cure; the general complaint of good people againſt theſe

theſe *Egyptian Flyes*, moved me to preach it; and the common good of God's Church (not without Solicitations thereto) hath now perſuaded me to publiſh it. Be not offended that ſo much is written of ſo minute a point; greater Tracts of the Fever, Stone, or Tooth-ach (whereby they might be certainly cured) would not be thought

thought too long, by such as are sick thereof. Indeed, this had never seen the light, but that the disease is so general, and that so few, if any, that have throughly, and on purpose handled it. However, this may serve (as the Learned L. *Verulam* hath it) to *awake better spirits, and to do the Bell-ringers office, who is first up, to call others to Church.*

Church. This being my first Essay, riper Judgments will (I believe) observe divers defects and superfluities therein, but Candour is a common debt, which we all owe one to another; and one poor mite may be accepted by men, when two mites can please Christ himself. It is my *Request to you* especially, that were the first *Hearers* here-

of,

of, that ye be not Hearers or Readers only, but Doers of the Word. The World knows, you have been *constant Hearers*, let the World see, that you are *careful Doers*. The indubitable truths and duties, that I have still laid before you, will undoubtedly convert you, or else undoubtedly *condemn* you; and therefore I beseech you in the bowels

bowels of Christ, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain. For now I live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. And my earnest request *for you*, is, that Divine Power may accompany Divine Precepts. If you reap any benefit, let God have all the *Praise*, and put the poor Instrument into some corner of your *Prayers*. I have chosen

a

a Dialect and Phrase familiar, for the advantage of the matter, rather than the applause of the Writer, being contented to be ranked among those, *qui non secundum artem scripserunt, sed secundum gratiam*; you will excuse the unevenness of the stile, and other imperfections, when you understand that I had more *Studies* than *Books* in the composing

posing hereof, being distant from my Library, and variously distracted in the writing about Distractions. But my aim being a solid Cure, not a starcht Discourse, I have chosen a Divinity Dress, and *not Preached my self* [who am the chief of Sinners] *but Christ Jesus my Lord* [the chief of Goods] *and my self*

Your Servant for Jesus sake,

May 10. 1667.

R. S.

The

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CHAP.

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MUSEUM

CHAP. I.

The Text explained, the Doctrine proposed, and a Distraction described.

SECT. I.

1 Cor. 7. 35.——*That you may attend upon the Lord without Distraction.*

THE Apostle is a Casuist in this Chapter, and the present Case is about *Virginity* and *Marriage*; wherein I. He determines for the former, [*ver.* 26.] when the Church was in the *Bonds* of Persecution, it was not safe to be in the *Bond* of Marriage. II. He prevents mistakes, [*ver.* 27, 28.] though the single man be fittest to suffer, yet there is neither that sin nor misery on the Married, as to dissolve the Sacred Knot. III. He offers Reasons for this Resolve. 1. One from the crosses and troubles *then* attending the state of Marriage, [*ver.* 28.] Thorns as well as Roses. 2. The other,

from the Cares that *always* accompany it, [*ver.* 32.] For the *Man*, now is his heart divided. *Before*, if I can but pleaſe the Lord, and contrive how to live comfortably with my God, this is all my care and ambition. *Now*, the ſtream of my thoughts and affections is parted; I muſt pleaſe and provide for my Wife, [*ver.* 32, 33.] For the *Woman*, now is her task doubled. *Before*, her whole aim was to pleaſe her Huſband in Heaven: *Now* muſt her deſigns and reſpects be for her earthly Husband alſo. [*ver.* 34.] Not that theſe ſeveral Relations are inconſiſtent, but to provide for theſe new Duties and Temptations will diſtract the mind, eſpecially in the days of Trial. IV. He qualifies his Counſel, and explains himſelf, [*ver.* 35.] It is no part of my meaning, either to obtrude the Doctrine or Duty of Cœlibate upon you, that to avoid a *ſtrait*, you ſhould run upon a *ſin*; but my motion is, 1. For your *profit*; my office, and ſo my counſel is rather to profit, than to pleaſe you. 2. There is a *comelineſs* or * convenience in it; both States are always lawful, but the one may ſometimes be more convenient. And 3. My ultimate deſign is, that you may chuſe that ſtate, wherein you may beſt attend

* *So the word is uſed*, 1 Cor. 14. 40.

attend upon the Lord without diſtraction. This is the occaſion and tendency of theſe words.

SECT. II.

FRom the general import of theſe words flows this *Annotation.*

That Condition ſhould be choſen by all that is beſt for their Souls. *An Obſervation.*

Your *outward* condition muſt ſerve your *inward* condition; and this life muſt be ſubſervient to another life. If ſingle life do every way better qualifie you to ſerve the Lord, and ſave your Souls, this is the beſt life for you; and if Marriage be better for your Souls, no ſtate is better.

For if the Soul proſper, all proſpers; and if that miſcarry, all is loſt. If to be a Prince were dangerous for the Soul, 'twere better to be a Beggar: If a poor Eſtate do enrich the Soul, it is the beſt Eſtate.

This needs not to be proved unto Chriſtians, that will be granted by Heathens; ſome of whom have ſo powerfully diſcourſed of the immortality and excellency of the Soul, that their Auditors have poſted to death by *ſelf-deſtruction*, for the happy ſtate thereof. If Pagans would chuſe to *die*, as a condition beſt for the Soul, well

may we chuſe that condition of *life* which beſt ſerves the Soul; leſt thoſe Acts which were unable to juſtifie *them*, prove able to condemn *us* with a witneſs.

Let this Axiom come in, when you are diſpoſing your Children or your ſelves; being confident, when you are moſt ſollicitous about the Soul, God will be moſt careful for the Body; and you will meet with leaſt *diſtreſs*, when you *flee* the leaſt *Diſtraction.*

SECT. III.

The Explication of the Text.

THe Words of the Text preſent us with a Deſign, that Believers as often aim at, and yet miſs, as any in the World; and which is ſo excellent a rare attainment, that the Holy Ghoſt even makes two words to expreſs it by, no where elſe found in the *New Teſtament*; *To attend on the Lord without Diſtraction. Hierom* confeſſeth that the Latine can hardly expreſs the Emphaſis of the Greek in this clauſe; and that thereupon it was wholly omitted in the Latine Books. In the words we muſt conſider,

1. The Matter what, [*Attend upon the Lord.*]

2. Th

2. The Manner how, [*Without Distraction.*]

1. The Matter what, [*Attend upon the Lord.*] The *Greek* word for [Attend] in our Copies hath a notable elegancy in it. 1. That you may be *fit and ready* for God's Service, that Religion and Religious Duties may sit fitly on you, that you may be *ready* to serve the Lord in Duty or Suffering. A most sweet frame of Soul, to be always bent and strung for the Service of God. *That Man is meet for the Master's use, that is prepared unto every good work,* 2 *Tim.* 2. 21. How many choice opportunities for Instruction, for Reproof, for Charity, for Prayer do we hazard; yea, and lose for want of a Soul quick and ready to our duty? 2. That you may be *Fixt and setled in his service.* The word intimates such an inseparable cleaving, such a marriage of the mind to the work of God, that we have in hand, as can by no means suffer a divorce. It should be as hard a matter to break off the heart from God in his service, being married to him, and setled in Holy Duties, as it is to abstract the Miser's Soul from the World, to which it is glued.

2. The Manner how, [*Without Distraction:*] The sense hereof is almost pre-

vented, by the *Emphasis* of the former word. Yet this Word is not without its great weight: And it speaks a *quiet unshaken and immoveable* frame of Soul, which cannot be whirled about with vain trifles. The Soul is never at that holy quiet, as when it is directly ascending and communing with the Lord, and therefore Satan exceedingly envies this Cœlestial happiness of the Saints, and if he cannot distract them *from* duty, be sure he will distract them in it; and this he doth very much by the World and the business thereof. And therefore (*saith the Apostle*) guide your condition so, in this suffering season, as that it may not misguide your hearts, in your attendance on the Lord; that you may not attend on your selves, nor on others; but on Him, who is the Centre of an Ordinance, and your All in All.

Take the sum of all in this Assertion, the main Doctrine from the Text.

It is a Christian's duty to attend on the Lord without Distractions.

And that I may from this Text and Doctrine profitably handle the case, and endeavour the cure of Distractions, I shall proceed to shew these things. 1. The nature of a Distraction. 2. The kinds of Distractions. 3. That it is our Duty to attend

attend upon the Lord without Distractions. 4. The Reasons why we must attend on the Lord without Distractions. 5. Answer the Objections. 6. Describe the Causes of Distractions. 7. The Evil of them. 8. The Cure of them. 9. Propound some encouragements under the burden of *Distractions*. 10. Draw some Inferences from this Doctrine. And first, of the first, *viz.* The Nature of a *Distraction*.

SECT. IV.

THe *first Head* will be to describe a Distraction. *A Distraction is a secret wandring of the Heart from God, in some Duty in hand.*

1. *It is a wandring*, As the remisness of our Devotion shoots short, so distraction shoots awry. 'Tis said, *Prov.* 27. 8. *As a Bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a Man from his place.* It is commonly known, the ready way to destroy the young in the shell, is discontinuance of heat; and to wander from our heavenly Work, produces the dead off-spring of unprofitable Duties. It would be almost as easie to trace and follow the Bird in her vagaries, as the volatile and intricate imaginations of

the heart. It is a digreſſion: you that are curious to obſerve the Miniſter in his digreſſions, how much more neceſſary is it to obſerve your own?

2. *It is ſecret*, in the Heart. And this contracts the guilt and nature of Hypocriſie upon a Diſtraction; for we have a ſhort and clear deſcription of hypocriſie, which agrees too well with diſtractions, *Mat.* 15. 7, 8. *This People draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me.* To have a bended knee, a craving eye, are choice *Expreſſions* of a Duty: But without the *Impreſſions* and attendance of the heart, * are double iniquity and flat hypocriſie. How empty would our Congregations be ſometimes, if no more Bodies were preſent than there are Souls? And what abundance of ſorry ſervice hath our God, that no body ſees?

* *In the Sacrifices of the Law, the inwards ſtill were offered to God, the ſkin was for the Prieſt.*

Yet how unknown ſoever theſe triflings of the mind are to others, or to our ſelves, yet are they moſt palpable to the Lord, who ſets our moſt *ſecret ſins in the cleareſt light of his Countenance*; Pſal. 90. 8. and though theſe *primo-primi motus* may antevert the uſe of Reaſon, ane therefore ſeem

ſmall

small Piccadillo's, yet they fall under the rebuke of Religion; and are as sinful as they are secret: Good in secret is the best Goodness; and secret sinfulness, the worst sinfulness.

3. This wandring of the Heart *is from God*, for God is the Object of Worship. To pray aright is, Zech. 8. 21. *To pray before the Lord.* To give thanks aright is, Dan. 6. 10. *To give thanks before his God*, not in his sight only, for so you are, when your hearts are worst; but they did look on God when they spake to him, as we do look on Men, when we speak to them. *Melanthon* saith, he hath heard *Luther* in his secret Prayers so pray, that one would verily think there were some body in the Room with him to whom he spake.

4. This wandring is, while some Duty is in hand; to desert Duty is *Nihil agere*, to do Divine Duties to Diabolical ends is *Malè agere*, to divert the Soul is *Aliud agere*. *Hoc age* must be the Christian's Motto, in the Worship of God. That was a good answer, *Neh.* 6. 3. of *Nehemiah* to his false friends, *I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?* He that is in a Duty to God, is about a very great

work, and that work ſtands or goes backward every moment the heart is away; and why ſhould a temporal vanity ſet back, and perhaps quite unravel your eternal concernment? How will that *Spartan* youth riſe up in judgment againſt us, that holding the Cenſer during *Alexander*'s Heathen Sacrifices would not ſtir his hand from its duty; though the burning Coals fell thereon, and made his fleſh to frie and ſmell in the preſence of all the Spectators.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Kinds of Distractions.

SECT. I.

THE *second Head* will be to take a view of the *kinds or sorts of our Distractions*; and they are diversified. 1. From the Fountain whence they flow. 2. From the matter whereof they consist. 3. From their Adjuncts. For the first of them, you will find,

1. *Many of our Distractions may justly be fathered on the Devil.* He is a spiritual substance, and is most properly conversant in spiritual sins; He is compleatly skilled in all thoughts whatsoever, and therefore what he imparts here, is of his own. *Zech.* 3. 1. *The High Priest Joshua* could not be at his Prayers for the *Israel* of God, but as Christ the Angel of the Covenant was on one

one hand, *Satan was ſtanding on the other*, and he was got at the * readier hand *the right hand*, the hand of action, that he might hinder him more *dexterouſly* in his devotion. And when *Satan ſtands on the right hand, the Prayer* is in danger to *become ſin*, *Pſal.* 109. 6, 7. When we are moſt ſerious before the Angel, the Devil is whiſpering at our Elbow, and who can be dull and watchleſs, when God is on one hand, and Satan on the other?

* Eccleſ. 10. 2. *A wiſe man's heart is at his right hand*, i. e. His heart is ready and prepared to every good work. *Annot. in loc.*

The Devil is afraid of a ſerious lively prayer at his heart; he knows, that can pull down in a minute, what he hath been contriving a thouſand years; and therefore if he cannot with-hold us from holy Duties, he will do his utmoſt to diſturb us in them. Hence the viſion of that *Holy man* who in the whole Market ſaw but one Devil buſie, (for there Self was at hand, Satan had no need to beſtir him) but in the Congregation there were multitudes of them, all their skill and power being little enough to ſtave off poor ſouls from *Jeſus Chriſt*. Alaſs! we pray, and hear, and live as ſecurely, as if there were no Devil at all.

And

And his ſuggeſtions in Religious duties are uſually more violent and impetuous, more dreadful and impious than they of our own breeding; called therefore *Darts*, and *fiery Darts of that wicked one*; Though he lay theſe brats of his at thy door, yet they will be counted in the number of his *ſins*, and of thy *afflictions*.

2. *Our diſtractions proceed from the mind and underſtanding.* The *vanity of the mind alienates us from the life of God*, and from communion with him. When a preſent and ſeaſonable petition or inſtruction is conveyed through the Ear into the Underſtanding, it wantonly plays therewith, and takes occaſion to run out on ſome contiguous notion; and from that to another, and at length reſts and dwells on ſome alien and unſeaſonable point, till the gales of the good Spirit, and the preſent matter be overpaſt. And thus by a default in the *underſtanding we ſeek not God*, nor find him as we might; And that excellent faculty, that would penetrate into the Divine Myſteries, and ſhould guide the will and heart unto God, by the *Ignis fatuus* of its unmortified Vanity, miſleads us from the chief Good, and intangles us in diſtractions. We read 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *Of a filthineſs of the Spirit*, Pſal. 53. 2.

Spirit, whereof ſurely this is a part, and muſt be cleanſed in them, that will *perfect holineſs in the fear of God.*

3. *Some diſtractions proceed from the Fanſie*, a moſt buſie faculty, that is moſt unruly and leaſt ſanctified in an Holy man. *Sometimes* by the help of memory, ſtepping back into things paſt, ſhe brings into the moſt ſolemn worſhip a thouſand paſſages that are paſt and gone, and rowling them in the head, carries ſoul and all quite away from God: hence it is, you often hear them ſay, *ſuch a thing came into my mind at Sermon or at Prayer* that was forgotten Weeks or Months before: yea, daring to re-act former ſins by contemplative wickedneſs in the very ſight of God, which doubles the guilt by repitition, and makes your former ſins exceeding ſinful. In this ſenſe that *Eccleſ. 6. 9.* is true, *Better is the ſight of the Eyes, than the wandring of the Deſire*; there is ſomething more of evil in theſe ſecond contemplations, than in the firſt Commiſſions. *Sometimes* the Fanſie will create a world of figments and notions out of nothing, and multiply impertinent thoughts upon no ground and to no purpoſe; and can ſally out of the preſent matter to every adjacent buſineſs, and make a great ado to bring nothing to

paſs,

paſs, Job 27. 8. *There is a path which no Fowl knoweth, and which the Vultures Eye hath not ſeen,* the Fanſie can find out ſuch a way; thus God is not in all (hardly in any of) our thoughts, when we pretend to treat him with the greateſt ſolemnity.

And *ſometimes* the Fanſie breeds Diſtractions by fore-caſting things to come: So many a man can moſt eaſily, on the Sabbath, contrive his buſineſs for all the Week after; and the poor woman in the corner of a Prayer order the buſineſs of all the houſe for a day. Hence many an affair is curſed to our hands, by our unhappy contrivance thereof in the time of Worſhip. Thus we have ſome, ſaying (in their hearts no doubt) *Amos* 8. 5. *When will the New Moon be gone, that we may ſell Corn; and the Sabbath, that we may ſet forth Wheat?* And it is well, if they have no fellows in this Aſſembly that are making their Hay, meaſuring their Corn, counting their Coin, if not providing for their Luſts, while they ſeem earneſt with the Lord negotiating for Eternity.

4. *Our diſtractions in God's Worſhip are ſometimes occaſioned by our outward ſenſes.* Moſt frequently by the Eye; a wandring Eye moſtly hath a wandring Heart; for when

when the Eye discovers any new, pleasing, or ridiculous object, it presently brings news thereof unto the Heart; and that debates and studies upon it, to the grieving of God's Spirit, and cooling of our own: and when that is over, a fresh sight presents it self, and the Eye is ready for that again, and leads the Heart into a maze of Follies. We read, *Lam.* 3. 51. *My Eye affecteth my heart, because of all the Daughters of the City*, that is with grief for their Calamity. There is a reciprocal working it seems; the heart at first affects the Eye, and the Eye can affect the Heart with Grief: even in like manner, when the Sons or Daughters of the City enter the Assembly, the Eye affects the Hearts; stirs, diverts, kindles the Heart; and the Heart corrupts, stains, and transmits its follies by the Eye; the precious Soul (that while) suffering between them, and the holy God and his Service wofully slighted.

You resolve in this duty, I will not swerve from God, nor step aside into the least *Distraction*, but you bolt the door, and let your Enemy in at the window. The thoughts that are shut out at the Street door, steal in at the back door, if you do not as well *make a Covenant with your Eyes, as keep your Feet, when you enter into the House*

Houſe of God. In this ſenſe the *Woman* and Man alſo, had need of the *Covering* of an holy and conſtant Watch, *becauſe of the Angels*; the wicked Imps of Hell, that ride abroad in the air, to carry away our Hearts from God.

SECT. II.

SEcondly, *Diſtractions are diſtinguiſhed by the Matter whereof they conſiſt*; which is ſometimes,

1. *Good.* It is Satan's ambition and triumph; when he can affront God with his own matters; As to bring in ſhreds of Sermons in the heat of Prayer; and long paſſages which you have read, to keep out material points, that you ſhould be hearing: He will hold your Husbands Picture before you, while you ſhould look on your Husbands face, and at length delude you with Shadows in ſtead of Subſtance. A good thing in its *nature*, may become a bad thing in its *uſe*, when it is out of ſeaſon. Jewels miſ-placed may grow worthleſs; a *Diamond* on the Finger is an Ornament, but in the Bladder a Torment: And God diſlikes his own things in the *Devils* way, little leſs than the *Devils* things themſelves.

As when one is playing in conſort, (it is Mr.

Mr. *White*'s compariſon) if we ſtay on any Note, while they who play the other parts go on; that which at firſt made excellent harmony, becomes now harſh, and ſpoils the Muſick: So thoſe thoughts that were ſweet and muſical, while they were ſuitable and pertinent to thy Prayer, become harſh by dwelling unſeaſonably upon them.

2. Sometimes our wandrings are made up of things *Indifferent* in themſelves; and theſe things by miſ-timing them, are debauched, and made very evil and offenſive unto God. As to talk with, or to ſee a Friend, is in it ſelf indifferent; but to perform this in the heat of Harveſt, may be folly. There are an hundred harmleſs thoughts both of things and perſons, which crowding into the ſacred preſence of God, and interpoſing between the Soul and its Maker, while the matters of Eternity are debating and concluding, are a great offence, and deſerve to be whipt, and poſted, and ſent away.

3. The *matter* of them *ſometimes* is abſolutely *Bad*, proud, wanton, malicious Thoughts: Blaſphemous thoughts, as whether God is, when we are praying to him, and the like. Able to ſink us at any time, but ſins of a double die in the Worſhip of God;

God; becauſe there the ſpecial and piercing Eye of God is upon us: As Theft therefore is pœnal in all places, by reaſon of its intrinſical evil, much more criminal is it, before a Judg in the Court: Even ſo are *theſe* thoughts guilty and baſe any where, but when they ſhall dare to intrude into the preſence of the Judg of Heaven and Earth, as it were daring a jealous God, this is prodigious Sin, and greatly provokes him. So *Ezek.* 33. 31. *They come unto me as the People cometh, and they ſit before me as my People; with their mouths they ſhew much love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetouſneſs.* What more ſweet than a religious Mouth? What more bitter than a covetous Heart? Eſpecially when the Heart *goeth out* after Covetouſneſs, purſues and follows it in the ſight of God: Oh dreadful! God, he is purſuing and following the Sinner with Chriſt and Mercy in his Arms, and the Sinner (the while) with his very Heart, is going after his Sin. And thus that Houſe which God calls the *Houſe of Prayer*, we make a Den of Luſt, Malice, Covetoutneſs, and Sin.

SECT.

SECT. III.

THirdly, *Distractions are distinguished by their Adjuncts.* For,

1. *Some are sudden.* As the Church, *Cant. 6. 12. Or ever I was aware, my Soul made me like the Chariots of* Aminadib; and happy is that Soul that is so sweetly and suddenly carried after *Jesus Christ.* So sometimes our treacherous Soul, e'er we know or are aware of it, makes us like those hasty Chariots; which misery comes about through want of watchfulness, which like a Porter should keep the door, and turn all straglers away: A thought is a sudden motion, and by it we may quickly step into Heaven or Hell; Now these Thoughts do steal in so suddenly, that we fall to muse how they came in, by what door they entred, and so are entangled in more Distractions by tracing the former, and commit new Errors by discovering the old.

But now other wandrings are more *premeditate*, and whereinto the Soul falls more leisurely, and wallows therein, either of choice, or without much interruption; and these have much more guilt and mischief in them.

2. Some Distractions are *Unwilling*, quite *præter intentionem agentis*, when the Heart

Heart like a good Archer aims directly at Communion with the Lord; aims at this, but Satan or his Corruptions jog him at the elbow, and make him to miſs the mark. This indeed is a ſad diſappointment, for a Noble Soul to imbrace the Dunghil inſtead of the Sun of Righteouſneſs; for a Man to loſe thoſe ſweet words and minutes which might be had with God; it is a ſad miſchance indeed, but which is common with Man, wherein if the Soul cry out as the forced Virgin, *Deut.* 22. 27. it ſhall not be imputed to her, eſpecially when there was neither vious provocation, nor ſubſequent conſent. And this is the caſe of blaſphemous thoughts, which are like Lightning caſt into a Room, which carries horrour, but ſprings from no cauſe thereof in the Room: So theſe thoughts come in upon thee, amaze and terrifie, ſurprize thee againſt thy will: But be of good comfort; neither leave off thy Duties, (thy Prayers will do thee more good, than theſe can do thee harm) nor haſten from them to gratifie Satan; for if God be not able to protect thee in the diſcharge of thy duty, it is time to think of another Maſter; but complain of Satan to God, parly not with them, but divert thy thoughts, and cry up that God

God the more, whom he tempts thee to blaſpheme.

But others are *willing* Diſtractions, which are the ordinary effect of an unſpiritual and unprepared Heart: To ſuch an Heart the whole Duty is a Diſtraction: when a vain and earthly Soul like a Truant Scholar, keeps out of his Maſters ſight out of choice, and with content, and is any where better than at his Leſſon: What little Reſt would ſuch a *Soul* find in *Heaven*? Or what true delight can he take in the moſt holy preſence of God *above*, that can find no reſt and ſweetneſs in his preſence *below*?

3. Again, ſome Diſtractions are *long*, and do conſiſt of a concatenation of vain thoughts, when they do *lodge* in the heart. The Lord ſtill calling at the door, and ſaying, *How long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Theſe do much alter the complection of the *Soul*, and argue too deep an habit of vanity therein. It is a true ſaying, Though we cannot hinder the Birds from flying over our heads, yet we may diſturb their rooſting or making Neſts in our hair. So though we cannot well hinder the ſudden ſuggeſtion of a vain thought, yet yet we may trouble its quiet reſting in the Soul. Yet ſuch ſtrange ſubtilty is there in

in us, that we can keep God in play a long time (yea when our ſelves are imployed in a Prayer) and be tampering with the World or Sin all the while, the Soul never coming in, till the *Amen* of a Prayer do awaken us.

But other Diſtractions are but *ſhort*, only a ſtep out of the way, and in again, and the Soul catcheth the faſter hold of God. And indeed when the Soul doth *follow hard after God* (as every one ſhould do in his ſervice) though it ſtumble, as it often happens to the moſt earneſt in the way, yet it recovers to its advantage, being more zealous after; The fall of the former being like that of the *Swine*, who lies ſtill in her mire; The fall of the latter, like the *Sheep* that falling riſeth, and runs the faſter. And thus you have ſeen the ſeveral *kinds* of Diſtractions, which was the *ſecond General Head.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

To Attend on the Lord without Distraction is our Duty.

SECT. I.

IN the *third place* I shall prove, that to *attend upon the Lord without Distraction is our Duty*, which will clearly follow by demonstrating, 1. The Possibility of it. 2. The Necessity of it.

First, *It is possible thus to serve our God:* the Sluggard, it is true, finds a Lion in his way to every Duty, and nothing is possible, because nothing is welcome. There is no Duty so easie, but can pose the negligent; none so hard, but is facile through Divine grace to the diligent. Perfection herein I assert not, but that we may attain it, in the substance and sincerity thereof is proved,

1. From the *Precept of God*, The wise and merciful God commands nothing, but he finds or makes it possible; He most truly saith, *Viam aut inveniam aut faciam.* His

His Commands are not Snares but Rules, yea and helps. When a *Master* commands, Power and Assistance wait not on his Commands; the Servants strength must perform the Master's will: But here are the commands of a *Father*, which when they out-strip his child's strength, are still accompanied with his own assistance; and the chair which the weak Child cannot bring in, he helps to fetch himself. Now behold the Divine Precept, 1 *Sam.* 12: 24. *Serve him in truth with all your heart.* What truth is there, while we appear to serve the Lord, and indeed do not think upon him at all! Or how is that with all the Heart, while there is not half, nor any thereof many times! while we can pray, and plot, and think, and look, and begin our Devotion only at the end of the Duty. Our Merciful Father will not impose an impossible Law upon us. It may by accident become impossible, but it is not so in it self.

2. In regard of *the Power of God* it is possible. Ours is the Duty, but his is the strength. God and his Servant can do any thing. When you look on a hard task, and your heart fails you, advance your eye of Faith, and you will find *God* the strength of your heart, *Phil.* 4. 13. *I*

can do all things through Christ that strengthneth me; lo here the Omnipotency of a Worm! If all things, (that is, all my duty) then this among the rest. But you will say, This was an Apostle, a Person of great strength and grace: yet still the *Acts* were from the Man, but the *Strength* was from Christ; for the same person saith, 2 Cor. 3. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Who though he be at the same time *Terrible out of his holy places*, and darts his Curses on them that do his work negligently, yet *the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power to his People, Blessed be God*, Psal. 68. 35. He gives, that is, he is ready to give it out, but alas his stock lies almost dead by him; and none sues to him in good earnest. His Power is at your service, and therefore serve your selves of it.

* *Compare* Deut. 10 16. *with* Chap. 30. 6. *And so* 1 Joh. 2. 27, 28.

3. In regard of *the Promise of God*, This is possible. To every Command there is a Promise *. The Command finds us work, the Promise finds us strength. As to this, some think that Clause in our *Magna Charta*, Ezek. 11. 19. of *One Heart* is intended this way; wherein the Lord promiseth an united

united heart to his Servants. An Hypocrite hath more hearts than one; an heart for his pleasures, an heart for his pride; here and there his affections are straggling, now saith God, I will give *one heart*. There is another Promise, *Jer.* 32. 40. *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*; neither in whole nor in part, unless fault be in your selves. Now these promises are *Amen in Christ*, and do belong to every Soul that is in Christ; who may claim and have the benefit of them.

4. Add hereunto the *Experience* of many Servants of God, who by an habit of holy watchfulness, have attained to considerable strength against these wandrings. Hope of relief makes many complain of their Distractions, when fear of Pride hinders them from divulging their attainments; And that which by the grace of God is possible for others, with the same grace is possible for you.

SECT. II.

SEcondly, *It is Necessary*, and therefore no doubt our *Duty* to attend on God without Distractions. It not only *may* be done, but *must* be done: You will say, They are happy that can do it, but they may be safe enough that cannot; Thus

the inside and substance of Religion is counted an high attainment, but not duty. I shall shew therefore that this Soul attendance on the Lord is necessary.

1. *It is necessary to the Essence or Being of the Duty*; As the Soul is necessary to the Being of a Man, the Body is no Man, but a Corps without it; even so a solemn Duty with a wandring heart, is but the Corps of a Duty. *Lam.* 3. 41. *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the Heavens.* The elevation of the hands signifies nothing, without lifting up the heart with them. If Prayer be the lifting up of the heart, what are words without the heart? A Man may spend the same time and the same words in a serious and in an heartless Duty, and yet the latter stand for nothing, for want of intenseness and attention. *Isa.* 64. 7. *There is none that calleth on thy name, because none stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.* If a Man come to the service of God, and do not excite and stir up his Soul to exercise Grace, (as a Man will blow a dull fire) his Faith, Zeal, and Humility; if he do not blow them up, but suffer his heart to run at random, the holy God counts all the rest as a Cypher without a Figure, it stands for nothing.

2. *It is necessary to comfort in the Duty.*

The

The service of God is a most sweet Pot of Ointment of a most refreshing odour, The gracious Soul is refreshed therein, as in *a Bed of Spices.* Distractions are the *dead Flies, Eccles.* 10. 1. which dropping into this sweet Ointment, cause it to send forth a stinking savour, displeasing to God, and unpleasing to the Soul. Where can the Soul be better than with God? what sweeter company, than that which Angels keep, or pleasanter imployment than conversing in Heaven? 'till a sort of wandring thoughts arise, and like a black Cloud quite hide the sweet beams of that Sun of Righteousness from the Soul, and then your comfort is gone. The sweetness of Musick consists in its harmony, when the strings are out of Tune, or untunably touched, it is but a harsh sound, there is no Musick: wandering thoughts are like strings out of Tune, there is no Musick in that Duty; the Holy Ghost goes away and likes it not; and the Soul likes it not, is weary of it, there is no sweetness in that Duty. It is a tried Maxim, *The more seriousness, the more sweetness*; the nearer to God, the warmer and merrier is the Soul, which inward comfort is some reward to the heart of a Christian, when his particular suit is denied; so that *in*

keeping of God's Commandments there is a great reward. The choicest of the Spirits sealing comforts, are bestowed in the lively service of God.

3. *It is necessary to the prosperity of a Duty.* Psal. 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my Prayer.* In God's service the Soul should be regarding God alone. If I regard a *Corruption* instead of *Christ*, if when some vain object presents it self, I turn my back on God to treat with Vanity, the Lord will not hear me, nor regard me. We read 1 *Sam.* 1. 13. of that gracious *Hannah*, that *she spake in her heart, only her lips moved not; her voice was not heard*; yet this wordless Prayer did the business; Lip-labour, if no more, is but lost labour, the sweating and labouring of the heart prevails. The Lord our God hath a Book of Remembrance from them *that think* on his Name, while he turns the deaf ear to them that cry Lord, Lord, and do not inwardly adore him. In short, thus saith the Lord God, *Ezek.* 14. 4. *Every Man* (Child or not Child) *that setteth up his Idols in his heart* —— *and cometh to the Prophet,* (sits demurely before the Preacher) *I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his Idols.* He that

that sets his heart on Vanity, Vanity shall be his recompense; if he will not affect his own heart, he shall never affect mine. He that withdraws his heart in asking, will find the Lord to withdraw his Hand in giving what he asks.

4. *It is necessary to have Communion with Jesus Christ in a Duty.* Which though it be a Riddle to unregenerate Men, yet is the very business and next end of the Worship of God; which if you lose, that Duty is lost. Jesus Christ calls, *Cant.* 2. 14. *O my Dove——let me see thy Countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy Countenance is comely.* Now if when he waits thus to be gracious, you wait not for his grace, nor watch for the blessed appearances of the Holy Ghost, you will lose that happiness, you will lose your labour, and at length your Souls. How are you troubled, that you are abroad when some good Customer comes to your Shop; it troubles you when that is bestowed with another, that was intended for you. O Sirs, the Spirit of God is a good Customer, and when he comes and you are away, you are absent to your loss; and therefore keep at home the next time.

How unmannerly would it be for the Subject to knock at his Prince's Chamber, and knowing (he is within, and waits for him) ſtep away about ſome frivolous trifle, when he hath done? The Prince appears, opens his Royal Door, and calls, but the Clown is gone. How fairly may he ſhut his door againſt ſuch a gueſt, and make him dance attendance long enough before he ſee his face? Ah how ſeldom do we ſee the face of God in an Ordinance, or much indeavour it? *Pſal.* 63. 8. *My Soul followeth hard after thee*, the Hebrew, *is glued to thee.* That Soul, and that alone that follows hard after God by the earneſt intenſeneſs of zeal and love, that cannot be content without him, that heart ſhall cleave to him, and have rare communion with him.

Thus you may plainly ſee, that to attend upon the Lord without Diſtraction, is a Duty, which is the *Third Point* to be handled.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Reasons why we ought to attend on the Lord without Distraction.

SECT. I.

The Fourth Point is to shew the Reasons for the Doctrine and Duty of attending on the Lord without Distraction. And they are drawn, 1. From the Nature of God. 2. From the Nature of his Worship. 3. From the Nature of our condition. 4. From the Nature of Distractions. *From the Nature of God.*

The First Reason is taken from the *Nature of God*: Each of his attributes plead for this; especially,

1. *The Greatness of God.* The greater the Personage, the greater the Reverence, and the more solemn your attendance is. Hence *Elihu* cries, *Job* 37. 19. *Teach us what we shall say to him, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* It is a bold adventure to speak to him, what is it then to trifle with him? wilt thou speak

to God, nay pray to God, and not ſo much as look that way when thou ſpeakeſt to him? This is to put on him the Robes and Title of a King, and uſe him like a Slave. A Prince may converſe with two or three of his Servants at a time, but it is Impudence for a Servant to talk to two or three Princes at a time. The great *Jehovah* can ſpeak with thee, and a thouſand more, and do all your errands at a time; but alas! thou art too poor a worm to entertain the great *Jehovah*, and other matters at once. We are his Creatures, *Iſa.* 45. 11. *Thus ſaith the Lord, the Holy One of Iſrael, and his Maker.* If a Servant muſt not be frivolous before his *Maſter*, when he is receiving his commands, who dares be ſo before his *Maker*, who can as eaſily reward or ruine us, as I can turn over a leaf in this Bible? This himſelf gives for the reaſon of that dreadful curſe, *Mal.* 1. 14. upon the *Deceiver, that having a Male in his Flock, offers to God a corrupt thing. For I am a great King, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and my name is dreadful among the Heathen.* Which of you will be thinking of your Wives, or Children, or Ground, when you are offering a Petition to a great King, or run after Feathers, when he is ſaying his mind to you? Thou

takeſt

takeſt God to be ſuch a one as thy ſelf, or elſe thou wouldſt never do it. Remember a great *God* muſt be worſhipped with profound veneration, and the moſt ſerious affections. A man muſt worſhip God, as if he were in Heaven; Oh if thou wert there among thoſe Myriads of Saints and Angels, with what care, and humility, and inſtance, wouldſt thou pour out thy heart to him, or hear his words to thee.

2. The *Holineſs of God* is another Reaſon: Who is ſo ſacred, that an unholy Thought is abomination to him; moſt eſpecially in his holy Service. Who can by an Eye of Faith behold the *Lord ſitting on a Throne high and lifted up, and his train filling the Temple, And the Seraphims crying one to another, and ſaying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hoſts*, Iſa. 6. 1, 2. and ſuffer his heart to be ravithed away with tranſitory toys in ſuch a ſacred preſence? Are the *Seraphims* amazed at his holineſs, and we untranſported? Their thoughts are continually terminated upon him, And ſhould ours be always flinching from him? The Holy *Lord of Hoſts* will not brook it. If you will not ſanctifie him, he will ſanctifie himſelf. If you that worſhip him, will not bear witneſs by your ſerious attendance to his Holineſs, He muſt bear witneſs

neſs to it by his Judgments on You: which indeed are not always viſible, but ever certain; not a man in the Congregation, but the holy *God* is ſanctified by him, or upon him. Little do we know, what inviſible dreadful effects there are of this, daily in our Congregations. And if our dear *Redeemer* did not ſtand as a ſcreen between us and his wrath, the beſt of us would quickly feel the effects of his Diſpleaſure.

3. The *Omniſcience of God* is a valid reaſon againſt Diſtractions. *Heb.* 4. 13. *All things are naked and open to him, with whom we have to deal,* not only naked on the outſide of us, but cut up and anatomized in the inſide. That ſharp and piercing eye looks through and through us, and neither doth or can look beſide us. Whither can I go from thy ſpirit? and whither can I flee from thy preſence? ſhall the Husband fix his eye on his Wife, and ſhe (that while) dart her glances on her Paramour? Is this reaſonable or tolerable? Get out of his ſight, and trifle on. Steal into ſome corner where he ſees you not, and be Truants and ſpare not. Be but an Eye-ſervant to God, and we'll ask no more. Be ſerious while He ſees you; dally not while

while he holds you the Candle. A curious Eye requires a careful Servant.

Object. But this is spoken *gratis*, I see no body but the Minister and the People, *seeing is believing*, I know no body that seeth me.

Answ. 1. No more doest thou see that faculty by which *thou seest*. Is there therefore no such faculty? Is there no spirits, because thou never sawest them? when did you see the wind, and yet you doubt not of it. Nay, hath he not declared to thee, what is thy thought, *Amos* 4. 13. in many a Sermon?

2. There is another eye by which God's *Ordinance Presence* is seen, which thou hast not. That is an Eye of Faith, which if fixed in thy heart would quickly make thee cry, *How dreadful is this place? This is no other than the house of God, and the Gate of Heaven.* If an hundred credible persons affirm, they saw a Great man in the Congregation, you would believe them, though not seen by you, and would conclude it your own inadvertency. Hundreds there daily are, that do avouch, they saw, felt, heard, embraced the gracious presence of *God*, and therefore conclude it your Blindness, not his Distance that you saw him not.

SECT.

SECT. II.

THE second Reason is taken from the *Nature of his Worship.*

1. It is *Reasonable Worship*; not only consonant to the Rules of Reason, and backed by the most rational Principles, but must be managed as a rational Act. Now it is a most irrational thing to converse with God without a heart; This is a silly thing, as *Hos.* 7. 11. *Ephraim is called a silly Dove, without heart.* A Dove without spirit; and a silly Dove, without reason or judgment. *God* had rather hear the roaring of a Lion, than an heartless prayer: He delights more in the chirping of Birds, than in singing of Psalms without understanding; for these do what they can, and so are accepted, but bruitish service from a reasonable Creature is intolerable. Is it reason you should cry out for the Spirit, and think on the flesh? be hearkning about another World, and ruminating on this? your eyes directed to Heaven, and your heart in the ends of the Earth? the tongue busie, and the soul idle? the knee devout, and the thoughts loose? there is no coherence, no reason in this. When ye work, work; and when ye pray, pray, and do

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it with understanding, 1 *Cor.* 14. 15. *What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and will sing with the understanding also.*

Consider, * that else thou art as a mad man before God, and God hath no need of mad men: if one should come to thee about business of Life and Death, and after a word or two therein, should run from one impertinent thing to another, would you not think him mad? If thy thoughts were put into words and mingled with thy prayers, what strange mad prayers would they be?

* Mr. *White* of *Thoughts.* p. 93.

2. It is *spiritual worship*, and therefore you may not be distracted in it. *Joh.* 4. 23, 24. *The true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* Others may seek to worship the Father, but the Father seeketh such to worship him; to wit, that worship in Spirit and in Truth; *In Spirit*, and so not like the formal Jews; *In Truth*, and so not like the ignorant Gentiles. And then Verse 24. *God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped.* Here is Must and Shall, and Reason for it. As a Spirit can do nothing at eating, so a Carkass can do nothing at praying.

praying. The eleganteſt tongues on earth cannot take one ſtroke at prayer; no the Soul muſt be in it, and the Soul muſt be buſie too. If we had only an *Idol* to ſerve, the body were enough, but *God* is a Spirit and cannot be converſed with without the Spirit, yea, and the whole Spirit alſo. Fond man, that thinks with his narrow ſoul to deal with *God* and ſomewhat elſe, who alone is immenſe and beyond our greateſt capacity! He muſt be taken up, and go out of the World *in a ſenſe* that will get into Heaven. The ſoul on the lip, and the ſoul in the ear, do rid work in the ſervice of *God*.

3. It is *ſweet work*. Pſal. 138. 5. *Yea, they ſhall ſing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord*: mark [*ſhall ſing*] their ſpirits ſhall neither droop nor ſtep aſide. He that attends on the *Lord* hath a moſt ſweet imployment: now the mind uſeth not to ſtraggle at moſt rare Muſick, or under an enchanting Song. *Alexander*'s great ſoul, yet is ſaid *exilire è convivio* under the charms of Muſick. O the gracious preſence of *God*! his ſweet ſmiles, and bleſſed love-tokens, that can tranſport *Angels*, ſure they may engage the heart of man, and ſufficiently fill it.

Read

Read the *Canticles* and ſay then, Is not converſe with *God* an Heaven upon Earth? and how far is Heaven from diſtracted thoughts? ſad and ſevere things afflict the mind, It would flit from ſuch ſubjects; but ſweet imployment ingages all the heart: next dwelling in Heaven, is the ſoul flying to Heaven in an Ordinace; our drieſt Duties yield us leaſt comfort: The nearer the Sun, the warmer. More cloſe to *God* more ſweet you will find him, and never more *joyful than in the Houſe of Prayer.*

SECT. III.

THE third Reaſon is taken from the *Nature of our Condition*, and that is this,

1. *We cannot live without God.* In him we live as to our Natural life, every breath is fetched from him; ſo in our ſpiritual life, the life of the ſoul is He that made it. A World without a Sun, is dark; a body without a ſoul, is dead; but a ſoul without *God*, is dark, is dead, is damned: It is true, men feed, and ſing, and make a ſhift without *God in the World*, but he that lives truly lives by Faith; the other life Beaſts live, they eat, and drink, and work, but

but know not God; but if you will define the life of a ſoul, *God* muſt be in the beginning, in the midſt, and in the end of it.

2. *Our only way of communion with God is in an Ordinance.* This is the River, the ſtreams whereof make glad the heart. Were a City beſieged by mortal Enemies round about, and no relief to be conveyed, but by the River that waters it; how fatal to the City would the ſtopping of that River be? that City muſt ſtarve, or yield: The ordinary ſupplies that a Chriſtian cannot be without, come ſwiming down from Heaven through the Ordinances of God; Diſtractions ſtop the River, hinder Prayer from aſcending to God, hinder inſtruction from deſcending into the heart, intercept commerce and ſtarve the ſoul. The zeal of the *Jews* was eminent this way, of whom *Joſephus* relates, that when *Pompey*'s Souldiers ſhot at the thickeſt of them in the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, yet amidſt thoſe Arrows, did they go and perform their rites, as though there had been peace: why, thy Prayer is thy Embaſſador, Diſtractions cut off the feet, and *Prov. 26. 6. He that ſendeth a meſſage by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.* A wandring Prayer is a meſſage by the hand of a Fool,

Fool, and that man is like to drink damage that useth it: A man is a poor thing without God, and *God* is not ordinarily met with but in an Ordinance.

3. *All our strength and heart is too little for this business.* All our understanding too little to apprehend his rare perfections; All our affections too weak and shallow, to love, embrace and delight in him; hence, *Mark* 12. 33. we are obliged to *love, and so to serve the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength,* that is with every faculty of the soul, and with the utmost strength of every faculty. Now if it be hard enough to climb the Hill unto *God* with wings: how shall we ascend with these weights about us, or think to please with half an heart, when the whole is too little? for *he is a great King and his Name is dreadful among the Heathen*; when all the Water in the Pool will but turn the Mill, that Miller is a Fool, that by twenty Chanels lets out the Water otherways: The intense and earnest heart is little enough to converse with God, all the Water in our Pool will but turn the Mill. What then can the remiss heart bring to pass, and how unlikely are we to obtain with the great God, with the negligent approaches

of

of a trivial ſpirit, with a little part of a little heart?

SECT. IV.

THE fourth Reaſon is taken from the *Nature of Diſtractions.*

1. *They divide the Heart, and diſable it wholly*; now a divided heart can do nothing at all, *Hoſ.* 10. 2. *Their heart is divided, now ſhall they be found faulty*; If one heart divided from another make a fault, much more faulty is one heart divided within it ſelf. Hence it comes to paſs, that *Satan* offers, as the falſe Mother did about the living Child, 1 *Kin.* 3. 26. *Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it*, If he cannot block your way to the preſence of God, and make good his claim to the living Child, as ſhe would have done; then with might and main, he furthers all imaginable diverſions to part the Soul; and cries, Lord let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it; well knowing, that (as the Child, ſo) the heart while intire, is a living and lively heart, but divide it and deſtroy it; As he that runs at once after two Hares, catches neither, ſo two buſineſſes at once, ſpoils both. He that thinks to treat the Creator and the creature

at

at the ſame time, enjoys neither of them: And thus the vain heart of man by over-doing, undoes it ſelf, and reaching at two matters, ſpoils them both.

2. *Theſe Diſtractions fruſtrate the Ordinance*; and cauſe the great name of *God* to be taken in vain. In ſtead of forcing the Heavens, theſe do but beat the Air, and cannot reach the heart of God, becauſe they never reach your own. And this is one of the follies of a roving heart, that it conſumes as much time in a ſenſleſs as in a ſerious Duty, and yet doth nothing in it, brings nothing to paſs. And ſo the Holy God ſtands over the heedleſs ſinner with *Job*'s words, *Job* 16. 3. *When ſhall Vain words have an End?* I am weary with this tinkling Cymbal, either pray in earneſt, or pray not at all: hear in earneſt, or hear not at all: As good not at all, as never the better. The ſervice of *God* requires a man, not a ſhadow; yea, all a man, and more than a man, our ſpirits, and God's ſpirit alſo. Thoſe that tremble at the prophane man's taking God's name in vain, ſhould make a conſcience, leſt they do it themſelves; leſt they be damned for their Oaths, and you for your Prayers; becauſe you wrong God's Majeſty under pretence of ſerving him, and ſo affront him with more ſolemnity.

3. *They*

3. *They contract more sin upon the soul,* We read, *Lev.* 10 1. that Nadab *and* Abihu, *the sons of* Aaron *took either of them his Censer and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord.* And the Lord took it in high disdain, *and with strange fire consumed them.* Sins of Ordinances are often extraordinary sins; as Sacrilege is a greater sin, than plain Theft, because it is a purloyning of what is consecrated; so a sin in worship hath this aggravation, that it is in a place and presence, and business that is set apart for communion with God. Hence it comes to pass, that many of God's children have had grievous pangs and terrour of Conscience on their Death-bed, for Ordinance-sins. He that should be scoring out his sins, and in stead of that scores on more, makes his sin exceeding sinful. O what need then have we to pray? *Psal.* 119. 39. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding Vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.*

And these are some of the *Reasons*, that confirm and enforce this Practical Doctrine. That we should attend upon the Lord without Distractions; and so you have the *fourth General Head.*

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Objections Answered.

SECT. I.

BUT because there is no Duty so clear that our sinful hearts will embrace, if any shew of contradiction can be produced; I shall wipe away all possible Objections against this Duty, which is the *Fifth general Head* to be handled.

Object. 1. *It is impossible* thus to attend on God without distractions. Such is the variety of Objects, such the imbecillity of our Nature, such the weakness of our Graces, such the suddenness and swiftness of a thought, that none but Angels can do this. You press impossibles, it can never be.

Answ. 1. Though this Objection hath been prevented before, yet seeing it recurs again, I answer,

1. Perfection herein is impossible in this life: Not but that a Prayer or other Ordinance

Ordinance may be attended with that intenseness, as to exclude every wandring thought that would step in; but to be perfectly free in every Duty from them, is rather to be wished, than hoped for in this life. That *Angelical* perfection is reserved for Heaven: This *Evangelical* perfection may be here attained, which is the prevalence of grace against them; and not only a Will but a Watch and an Endeavour to be utterly rid of them.

Answ. 2. And in this sense, there is no Divine precept impossible: Though our Lord Jesus saith, Joh. 15. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing*; yet the Apostle finds, Phil. 4. 13. *I can do all things through him that strengthneth me.* If all things, then why not this! Though it were impossible *ex parte Rei, in its self*, yet it is possible *ex parte Dei, with God's help*; we are prone to think that we can compass easie things by our own strength, and that difficult things are too hard for God. Have you ever tried to the utmost what *God* and you can do! could not you have heard a Sermon better, if a naked Sword had hanged by a single twist over your bare heads; and have prayed more cordially, if you had seen every word you prayed, written down by the hand of God. The same circum-

circumspection that keeps a Distraction out of one sentence, might (were you faithful therein) keep it out of two, or ten, or twenty; and he that can be temperate for a day, might be temperate every day, if he did his best.

3. It is a mixture of Cowardize and sloth that makes it impossible. It is an argument of a slothful heart to say, *There is a Lyon in the way, O there is a Lyon in the streets*, Prov. 26, 13. yet if there were a Lion in the way to Heaven, thou must rather run upon him, than run from God. There is a worse Lion will meet you in the way to Hell. No, no; it is not the danger without, but the dulness and slothfulness within, that creates the impossibility. How many hundreds out of fearfulness and idleness, have restrained Prayer before God; till being soundly awakened they set about Prayer; and found it both feasible and delightful? Religion in the power of it, is a work of pains. If you will not sweat for Heaven, you must never have it; try but the next duty with your best Diligence, and you shall find it possible to the power of Grace, which looks impossible to the strength of Nature.

SECT. II.

Obj. 2. *IT is Difficult*: If it be not impossible, yet it is very hard, it is a Lesson for the Upper Form in the School of *Jesus Christ*. We mean Scholars need not attempt it, because we cannot attain it: as good to sit still, as rise up and fall. This is too hard for us.

Answ. 1. This argues the excellency of it, the more hard, the more honourable, and therefore this should rather wher, than dull thy courage. If you except all hard points out of the Practice of Piety, you will leave but few to be practised; it is the idle Scholar that skips over the hardest Words of his Lesson, but the Rod must fetch him back unto them: neither must you expect that God will take any notice of your easie duties, if you turn off the hard; he could have Servants enough to do his easie work, but Religion must go all together, and almost Christianity will not serve the turn.

Answ. 2. The way to Heaven is hard, and this you were told at first, *Mat.* 7.14.

Because

Because straight is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto life. If you like it not, let it alone, but see you exchange for the better. To get a Kingdom is not easie, it's easie to lose one. Who gets a Race without sweating, or Victory without bleeding, or Heaven without striving? Hence Mr. *Latimer* to one that objects against the Duty he was pressing, (which was, that Landlords should send for their Tenants and end differences among them) that this were a good work indeed, but marvellous hard. O saith he, my Friend, *It is an hard matter to be a Christian.* Heaven was never gotten yet without violence, and there is no new way found of coming there. But if *Christ Jesus* had not done harder work than this for thee, thou must never have come there.

Answ. 3. And is there no hardship in attending upon sin? Is it an easie thing to serve the Devil? Wise *Solomon* saith, Prov. 13. 15. *The way of Transgressors is hard.* Our love to it blinds our eyes, or else he serves an hard service, that dances attendance on any sin; The *Lascivious* man swallows many difficulties, perhaps weeks and months together, to continue the

pleasure of an hour. How many dark night doth the *Drunkard* walk, and hard words indure, and hard shift make to feed that senseless lust! who would digest the life of a Covetous *Worldling*? hard fare, hard work, hard journeys, for what may be consumed in two hours; to say nothing of the life of the envious, the ambitious, the malicious man, whose daily bread is mingled not only with sweat, but gall and bitterness; and yet who hears them complain of difficulty, or throw off their designs for hardness. And is it not far better to conquer difficulties for Heaven than Hell, and venture upon hardship for Christ and thine own Soul, than for Satan and thy Damnation? especially when Love to the Service of God would make this Yoke as easie, as Transgressours labour is to them.

Answ. 4. Though it be hard to keep off these Distractions, yet it is necessary, it must be done. Good *Mary* would not by any business be Distracted in her attendance on Christ, *Luke* 10. 42. and he resolves therein, that she did the *One needful thing*. Poor men find it hard to work six days together, but there being a necessity of it, there is no excuse; they could

could find twenty put offs, but it muſt be done, work or ſtarve. We have the ſame Dilemma, pray or periſh, and that is not half a Prayer, that is filled with Diſtractions.

Anſw. 5. Though it be hard, yet it is ſweet, *Prov.* 3. 17. *Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs*; and this is one of them. You ſhall ever obſerve, the more wandring the heart, the more weariſome the Duty; a divided heart can taſte but partial comfort; and fulneſs of joy follows, where the full bent of the Soul goes before. Our common experience tells us, what Peace, what Joy, what Confidence, what Suavity fills the heart, when we have (though with ſome difficulty) approached the Lord, enjoyed him, and attended on him without Diſtraction. What is more hard to the Brain and Body than Study? for Pains, a Scholar would chooſe the Plough before it; the Brain, the Back, the Heart and Spirits are pained and ſpent: yet no Employment ſo ſweet, the Mind, and Brain, and Heart refreſhed, and a right Scholar would hardly change employments with a Prince; ſo ſweet, ſo raviſhing is this hard Employment. Even ſo it is with Prayer, or any Holy Ordinance,

the ſweetneſs of a watchful ſerious frame, doth fully compenſate the difficulty thereof.

Anſw. 6. Cuſtom and Practice will make it much eaſier; he that executes the Law on Vagrants, though at firſt he were peſtred with them, will after a while with eaſe be delivered of them: So that reſolved Chriſtian, who keeps up his Watch and Ward a while, ſhall find it each day eaſier than other, to attend on *God* without theſe vagrant thoughts. Uſe and Cuſtom makes the hardeſt things eaſie. As a Wiſe Man that converſes in the midſt of his obſerving Enemies, by *Uſe* is inured to all Caution, and can eaſily avoid all dangerous words or behaviour; though it be hard, he is uſed to it; ſo practice will wonderfully facilitate this hard duty. You once thought it impoſſible for you to Pray, but Practice hath made you perfect. The ſame Spirit by the ſame help, can and will perfect you in this. This is one of thoſe Infirmities the Spirit of God will help.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Object. 3. *THe Commonness of these Distractions*; No man but is full of them, all serious Christians complain of them. What is so ordinary cannot be very evil; these Vanities that every one hath, I cannot expect to be without, and therefore must be content.

Answ. 1. This must be answered with Grief. Every man is full of them, and every Good man is sick with them. If every mans Body were gone after his Soul, this would sometimes be an empty Congregation. Every solemn look hath not a serious heart, and there are but few that make a business of Prayer; and this is a lamentable thing, that we can hold a discourse with man, or crave a kindness, or drive a bargain without a wandring thought; till our face be set towards God, and that we begin a duty of Worship, and then or ever we are aware, our Soul is slipt off her Chariot wheels, and our sight of God is lost.

Answ. 2. And yet some watchful Christians (as we observed before) have got a good riddance of them; to *accuse* others is

a poor *excuſe* to you. As their humility teaches them to complain of the worſt, ſo your Charity ſhould cauſe you to think the beſt: No doubt they that are ſick of them, do by degrees get Phyſick againſt them, and grow better.

Anſw. 3. By this Plea all Sins might be juſtified; Thus *Swearing* might be advanced before *Praying*, for it is more common than Prayer; *Revenge* is more common than *Forgiveneſs*, but this is no excuſe for it. He that will do as the moſt do, muſt go whither moſt go, *Exod.* 23. 2. *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil*, no nor to think evil. If thou wilt be Chriſts Diſciple, thou muſt be ſerious and attentive, though the whole Congregation trifle. True Sanctity is not grounded on *mens practice*, but on *Gods Precept*. Make no Apologies but ſuch as you can ſtand to before the face of God. What a poor Plea will it be to ſay, I was drunk for Company, I ſtragled from God for Company, get thee to Hell for Company; that which will be no mitigation of your pain, is no extenuation of your crime. If many diſpleaſe the *Lord*, you have more need to pleaſe him; if many play, you have more need to work, and rather

chooſe

chooſe to be ſaved with a few, than damned with a crowd.

Anſw. 4. In ſuch an univerſal loytering, thy care will be more acceptable; Loyalty is doubly valued and rewarded, where Rebellion is general; and one dutiful Child is cheriſht among many diſobedient, *Iſa.* 66. 2. *To this man will I look, to him that is poor and contrite and trembleth at my Word.* The *Great Jehovah* there over-looks Heaven and Earth, and the Houſe of his reſt, to fix his bleſſed eye on this *man* or *woman*, that when he comes to a Sermon doth not, dare not triſle, but trembles at the Word, and that feels every ſentence at his heart. When *Gallants* come into the Congregation, then *Man* looks; but when the *Poor* trembling Hearer comes in, then *God* looks; The Angels gaze at ſuch gueſts, as vain People do at Silks and Faſhions. O it is a rare ſight to ſee a Chriſtian in earneſt; to behold an humble man converſe with God, the *Hoſt of Heaven* riſe up and are taken with it. If therefore it be ſo common to be diſtracted in Duties, do thou diſdain to be in the common faſhion, get quickly into the Mode of Heaven.

SECT. IV.

Object. 4. *God will accept the Will for the Deed;* I would be free from these temptations, but in this life I cannot, and therefore shall sit down content. God is merciful, though you are strict. And he hath said, 2 Cor. 8. 12. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Answ. 1. This Axiom and Scripture were never intended as a Pillow for the Lazy, but a support to the weary; nor to exempt us from our duty, but to comfort us under our weakness. What Parent will accept this answer from a negligent Child? or what Master will be content of this excuse from a slothful Servant? *offer it now to your Governour*, and imagine not, it will pass with God, which would be counted a mockery with men.

Answ. 2. God never accepts the Will for the Deed, when the Deed may be done; when the *Idem* cannot be paid, the *Tantundem* shall serve; yea and so far as the Deed can be done, the Will without it, is

but

but a mockery unto God. But wherein an upright heart hath done its utmoſt in the uſe of all means, and would do more, this will is accepted for the deed, even as if thou hadſt perfectly obeyed; And ſo that Scripture cited is expreſs in the caſe of charity; *It is accepted according to that a man hath.* So that a man muſt give according to that he hath, or elſe his willing mind ſtands for nothing. Now have you done your utmoſt againſt Diſtractions! can you do no more? If Death ſtood at the end of the Duty, you could double your Watch. Plead not this till you have done your beſt.

Anſw. 3. It is far from the quality of Grace, to ſit down content in any defect or ſin, or to vouch the mercy of God to ſecure the ſoul in any tranſgreſſion: who when he is dreſt in his richeſt garments of Mercy, *Exod.* 34. 7. *Yet will not by any means clear the guilty.* No, it is the Genius of true Grace to be reſtleſs under his defects, if he cannot be rid of them: to row up the ſtone, though it tumble ſtill upon him, and cry out and roar under thoſe diſeaſes that are uncurable. After the Apoſtle had told us, *Rom.* 7. 19. *The good*

I would

I would, I do not, but the Evil that I would not, that I do. He lies not down, and resolves to let it run, but fights and strives, and cries, *O wretched man that I am*, ver. 24. *Si dixisti sufficit, periisti.* If thou once sit down, be content, and say, I will strive no more, thou giveſt the field. The Spirit withdraws with tears, and Satan goes away with triumph.

4. The *Great* JEHOVAH is so far from being content with such a frame, that he hath plainly *cursed all such as do the work of the Lord negligently, or deceitfully*, *Jer.* 48. 10. Though you neglect not the Work of the Lord, yet if you do it negligently, you are in danger of the Curse: Every Distraction is a neglect, in each wandring you deal deceitfully with God, and for every of these in a Duty, Gods Law pronounceth a Curse. And is the Divine Curse inconsiderable with you? Who could digest an hundred Curses, though pronounced at your door by a provoked Neighbour? O how much more intolerable is it, to be obnoxious to an hundred Curses from Heaven, justly deserved and infallibly inflicted, if Repentance prevent not. It is not the Work of the

the Lord will excuse you; *Nadab* shall perish with his strange fire, as well as if he had offered nothing at all. Take heed of forgiving your selves, when God forgives you not. A negligent Duty is abomination to God.

And thus you have the most material Objections answered, which is the *fifth Point* handled.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

The Causes of Distractions, with their Remedies.

SECT. I.

WE shall now proceed unto the more Practical part of this Subject, namely to find out and sum up the causes of this Epidemical Disease, which is the *sixth Point* to be handled:

The *First Cause* of Distractions in God's Service is, *Secret Atheism.* There is an *Atheism of the Head*, Atheism of the Heart, and Atheism of the Life. In the first, The *Fool hath said in his Heart, There is no God, Psal.* 14. 1. Mark, it is not, He hath *thought* in his heart, but *says* it by rote to himself; rather as what he would have, than what he doth believe. And of him this is truly said, That the speculative Atheist is the greatest Monster in the World, except the Practical. And our late Divisions, by the help of our corrupt Natures,

Natures, have proſelyted a conſiderable number to this deſperate opinion: As if the different opinions about the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, ſhould render it doubtful whether the Sea did ebb and flow; or the diſputes about the manner of Viſion, ſhould call our Sight it ſelf into queſtion: You would think it a fond concluſion to ſay: Becauſe Philoſophers argue much about the ſenſitive and vegetative Faculties of the Soul, that there is no rational Soul at all, in that theſe very velitations and debates do argue a rational Soul, by and with which theſe points are diſputed: even ſo it is notorious madneſs to conclude, from the variety and diverſity of Opinions about Religion and Government, that there is no *God*; ſeeing you are ſupported by him, while you diſpute and argue about him.

Atheiſm of the Heart, is, whereby the Fool ſaith *alſo in his Heart, There is no God*; that is, either ſecretly queſtions, or but coldly aſſents to the exiſtence of God, or heartily wiſhes there were none at all. And it is worth obſervation of both theſe, that they are ſuch as are obnoxious to the Divine Majeſty by ſome miſdemeanor: The Felon wiſhes there were no Judg at all; yet even theſe are forced in ſome pangs

pangs to acknowledge him, at some fright by thunder, under some horrour of Conscience, or in the point of death, they are forced to give *Jehovah* his due. And they also in any sudden fright, or great extremity, use to cry out, *O God*, *O Lord*, as earnestly as others.

Atheism of the Life, that is described, *Tit.* 1. 14. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.* Now both these latter do breed of the first, and this last is most visible in our Distractions: For if thou didst as verily believe God present in an Ordinance, as he that sits next thee, durst thou trifle so egregiously as thou dost? The Minister looks at you, and you dare not talk; if you saw him that looks at you from Heaven, you durst not straggle: And therefore the more or less strong our belief is of *God*, the more or less lively are we in our applications to him. Oh the patience of God! that he can endure the Worm to doubt of him, yea, implicitely to deny him, and not demonstrate himself by a Thunderbolt! But the Country mans ignorance of the *Primum Mobile*, doth not nullifie it: no more doth the Atheists Infidelity degrade the *Primus Motor*, the Majesty of Heaven, *Heb.* 11. 6.

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He that cometh unto God, muſt firſt believe that he is.

The Remedy of this Cauſe, is, *Humbly to read the Scripture*, which is the moſt clear, certain and convincing way to work Faith herein. Prayer and the Bible have convinced more than any other Reaſons, and recommend me to *Moſes* above *Plato*, for the demonſtrating a Deity. All that Reaſon can ſuggeſt, might be written by an Infidel; and more Infidels (I trow) have been convinced by reading and hearing the Books of the Chriſtians, than have Chriſtians been ſettled by reading the Books of Infidels. And therefore although holy *David*, *Pſal.* 19. 1. appeals to the Heavens, and the Hoſt of them, as a moſt ſtrong Argument to declare God, and ſo it is; (for what reaſon but the *Hand of a God*, can be rendred, that the *Planets* being all of one matter, ſhould have contrary motions, ſeeing things of the like matter have by Nature like motion?) yet laying the *Topick* aſide, he pitches upon the Law of God, *ver.* 7. as the moſt perfect and ſure way to demonſtrate a God, and convert and enwiſe a Soul. Then go to God in Prayer, and beg him to touch thy Heart, and open thine Eyes, and thou ſhalt quickly ſee him *that is not far from every one of us.*

SECT.

SECT. II.

THE second *Cause* of Distractions in the Service of God is *The corruption of our Nature*, that is, of Soul and Body: so that our inward faculties do act our outward senses, and they infect our inward faculties in this business, *Mat.* 15. 19. *Out of the Heart proceed vain and evil thoughts*; are not forced out, as sparks out of a Flint, but come out thence of themselves, as sparks out of a Furnace: View the mind and its accident is Vanity, and how can a vain Mind be serious with God without a great deal of grace? The Heart its name is *Deceitful*, and makes a trade of jugling and purloyning the solemnest Duties; and when the ear receives the word as a *lovely Song*, she runs *after covetousness* the while. *Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner*, like the lewd woman, *Prov.* 7. 11. The Eye that should be fixed on Heaven, is in the ends of the Earth, and gathering a straggling notion from every object. The ear by every noise calls off the soul from its great business; thus wofully the old man is bent against the new man, *Rom.* 7. 23. *The law of the members wars against the law of the mind, and leads us into captivity to the law of sin that is in the members.*

members. When the mind it ſelf is ſet in its moſt hearty purpoſes to wait on God, and offer him a faithful ſacrifice, then comes in the Law of the Members, and either ſuggeſts within, or admits from without ſome roving notions, and theſe lead the poor ſoul like that young man, *Prov. 7. 21, 22. forced with flatteries, like the Ox to the ſlaughter, or the Fool to the correction of the Stocks.* And he that began in Heaven, ends on Earth, if not in Hell. Thus the good he would do, he cannot. O wretched man that muſt lead his life with ſuch an heart!

As if a man were tied ſtill to ſhoot in a warping Bow; he ſettles himſelf in his right poſtures, aims directly at the White, but his warping Bow ſtill carries the Arrow quite beſides the Butt, and his skill is rendred ineffectual: ſo the poor upright Chriſtian in a duty, orders his buſineſs and his heart, as well as ever he can, and aims at the glorifying of God, and getting good to his ſoul; but the corruption of his nature diverts him, and perverts him from his purpoſe. This hinders the elevation of the ſoul, which would fix it in Gods ſervice, like one that hath a light heart, and an heavy body; the light heart would flie, the heavy body clips her Wings, and will

will hardly creep. Oh! ſaith the ſoul, now will I ariſe and ſoar into Heaven; I muſt, I will ſpeak with my God; my wants are preſſing, my ſins increaſe, Eternity approaches, who will give me the Wings of an Eagle? I will never live ſo far from God, I will away. Thus this *Bird of Paradiſe* takes wing, when behold the ſtone of her corrupt nature hangs at her leg, and weighs her down: ſhe flutters a little, but cannot fly, for her heart ſhe cannot fly, indeed *becauſe of the heart* ſhe cannot fly.

And not only the *dulneſs*, but the *deceitfulneſs* of our corrupt Nature furthers our diſtractions. For though the heart be deceitful from the beginning to the end of the Year, yet her prime and ſubtleſt ſleights are ſhewed in the ſervice of God; where ſhe is put hard to it to ſhift for her ſelf, and therefore uſeth her fineſt Notions and ſlieſt Fetches to evade the preſence of *God*, and powerful influences of the *Holy-Ghoſt*. Like ſome ſubtile Thief, that joyns himſelf to the unwary Traveller, and gives him pleaſant Company a while, till when he watches his time he draws him with him out of the way, and takes his purſe; before he is aware he is in a Wood, and his Purſe is gone. Even ſo, the heart of

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man takes on to be very willing to Prayer, or other good Duties, and goes with us a while; but ere we have ſtept twenty ſentences into our Work, this deceitful *heart turns us aſide, brings us to feed upon aſhes,* and binds up the faculties, that we *cannot deliver our ſouls, nor ſay, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Iſa.* 44. 20. Now is it not an Hell upon Earth to live with ſuch a heart, to croſs a man in the midſt of his greateſt buſineſs, diſappoint him in his higheſt expectations, and make him loſe his labour, if not his ſoul?

The Remedy againſt this corruption of our Nature is hard. To divert a ſtream is eaſie, but to dry up a Spring is hard; ſtop it here, and it breaks out there. So to divert and diſcharge a wandring thought is eaſie in compariſon, but the womb of the heart is pregnant; kill one Viper, and there is an hundred more ready for the birth. We think our worldly buſineſs is the only cauſe of them, but the moſt retired *Hermits* tells us, that an unſanctified or half ſanctified heart can find matter enough of diverſion in a naked Cell. And that the corruption of the ſubject, as well as the bewitching of the object, makes us trifle in God's Worſhip. As *Hieron* tells of *Hilarion*, whoſe heart roving from God, was

was soundly scourged for his labour by an Angel. And therefore the only cure of this is, to get a *true and greater degree of sanctifying grace.*

You that have no grace, can never pray well, till your hearts be changed; a new heart can only sing this new Song well. You complain that you want *expressions*, ah! it is *impressions* you want, and nothing else; if you had that sense of sin, that makes the soul to ake and mourn, you would find words sufficient to express it, and you would not be playing with your fingers, when you are in danger of falling into Hell fire; nor smiling at one another, when *God* is frowning, and thundring against you. He that feels the Stone to torment, hath few wandring thoughts, while he is telling his grief and seeking help. The condemned Prisoner is not sleeping, or fooling at the Bar. *Dionysius* his Flatterer had little mind of his Musick, seeing the naked Sword hang by an hair over his empty head; neither would a poor sinner, if he were enlightned to see his guilt and danger, so commonly and senselesly trifle before God, when his matter is debating, and terms of life or death proposing. Alas! there is no hope of your cure in this, till your fundamental Disease

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be healed; your whole life is a long diſtraction from the true end, and main buſineſs of life; and therefore it ſtands you upon: if ever you would perform a pleaſing Duty unto God, to get *Grace whereby you may ſerve God acceptably*; for without that you cannot do it.

And to counterballance that corruption of Nature in you, you that have ſome ſanctification, muſt get more. This ſweet Wood caſt into that bitter Water, will by degrees render it more wholeſome. The more ſanctification, the more you will be mortified to the World, and all the buſineſs and vanity thereof; and then its thoughts and cares will not ruſh in with that violence upon you, but ſtay to ſpeak with you at your better leiſure; or if they be invading the heart, you will have more vigour of Grace to expel them, and more repentance for them; you will be more lively, and ſpiritual, and fervent in Religious Duties, and ſo leſs room for theſe wandrings; for he that is hot in his buſineſs, prevents the aſſault of the moſt importunate diverſions; and a lively ſerious Chriſtian runs on his errand, like *Eliſha*'s Servant, 2 *King.* 4. 29. *If thou meet any man, ſalute him not; and if any ſalute thee, anſwer him not again*; Satan cannot faſten diſcourſe

diſcourſe on ſuch a man: yea, and generally, the more Holy the heart is, the fewer of theſe wandring thoughts; forasmuch as ſanctity being his frame and element, heterogeneous by-thoughts do put him out of his temper, and ſo diſpleaſe him, and cauſe ſome ſmart to the ſoul and the ſin that really moleſts a man, will hardly ever prevail over him; and finally, the more holineſs you attain, the more afraid will you be to diſpleaſe God. For to be *amended with a little croſs, to be affected with a little mercy, and to be afraid of a little ſin*, are certain arguments of a great deal of grace. And therefore an holy Chriſtian is more troubled at a vain thought in a Duty, than a ſleight Chriſtian is at the total neglect of a Duty.

It follows therefore, that all means be uſed and improved to the utmoſt, for the increaſing of the Grace of God in your hearts, there being as much duty to grow in Grace, as to get it; and no greater argument of ſincerity, than endeavours to grow better. Turn therefore thoſe many thoughts you ſpend about the truth of your Grace, into all poſſible care to advance and increaſe it, ſo will you beſt clear your doubts, and in particular cure your Diſtractions.

SECT

SECT. III.

THE *third Cauſe* of Diſtractions in the Service of God, is, *Unpreparedneſs unto it*, Job 11. 13. *If thou prepare thine heart, and ſtretch out thine hands to him—— If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away.—— Then ſhalt thou be ſtedfaſt.* Firſt, Prepare the heart, then ſtretch out the hands. He that keeps not his foot, when he goes into the Houſe or Service of God, a thouſand to one he ſtumbles, and offers but the ſacrifice of Fools. He that is unfitted for any work, muſt needs be unfixed in it. * As holy Mr. *Dod* uſed to ſay of Afflictions, when we are prepared for them, they are like a Sword that only ſtrikes upon our Armour; but when we be unprepared, they are like a Sword ſtriking on our bare skin: Even ſo, when the heart is well fixed and prepared for the *Lord*'s ſervice, an impertinent thought or ſuggeſtion falls on our Armour, but when we come unprepared, it meets with our very hearts, and runs away with them. If a man chop into a *Prince*'s preſence undreſſed, unbruſhed, or without his band, you may eaſily imagine how,

* Hence *David*, *Pſ.* 57. 7, 8. So *Deborah*, Judg. 5. 12.

when he is aware of the feathers or dirt up and down, he is distracted: so is the Soul wofully carried off, when approaching to *God*, the follies of sin, and vanities of the World disfigure and divert it from a close converse with God; and therefore a *serious Christian* doth not only pray, and watch in Prayer, but watcheth unto Prayer. We so eat our meat (says *Tertullian* of their primitive Supping) as remembring we must go pray before we go to bed. And here I shall answer a necessary Question, *viz.*

Q. *What kind of Preparation is necessary before our ordinary duties of Worship?*

Answ. 1. The light of Nature teacheth us to prepare for every weighty action. Approaching to the Lord of Heaven and Earth is such. Who teaches the Client to consider his case, when he comes to state it to his Advocate? or the Husbandman to prepare himself for his tillage, or the poor Suiter to weigh his request that he makes to a Prince? Why, the light of Nature teacheth this; and the light of Scripture distinguisheth an upright man from an hypocrite hereby, 2 *Chron.* 19. 3. *There are good things in thee* —— *in that thou*

thou haſt prepared thine heart to ſeek God: there was *Jehoſaphat*. Again, 2 *Chron.* 12. 14. *Rehoboam did evil, becauſe he prepared not his heart to ſeek the Lord.* He ſought God, it is likely, as many will do, but he cared not how he did it; and ſo though he did a good thing, yet, ſaith the Scripture, *He did evil.*

Anſw. 2. Moſt certainly the Lord is a *Great God*, who can raiſe or ruine thee in a moment, and whom the Angels approach not without a profound reſpect: and ſo likewiſe Duties of Worſhip are great and weighty Duties, wherein you tranſact for a Kingdom, and plead or hear the cauſe that is for Life or Death. You drink a Cup that will either mend or end you, and who is ſufficient for theſe things? And it is manifeſt, that we are naturally unprepared, and to every good work reprobate. The poſiture of our hearts is inverted, and now they are open downwards, and ſhut towards Heaven; all which if you lay together, it muſt needs follow, that ſome preparation is neceſſary, even for the ordinary Duties of God's Worſhip.

Anſw. 3. The *hearts* of men are of a different temper, and ſo are their occa-

ſions; the hearts of ſome are always in Heaven, or elſe within a Call: they are, as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks, *Tit.* 3. 1. *Ready to every good Work.* When a duty of Piety is offered, they are ready; when an object of Charity is propoſed, they are *ready to diſtribute.* And this preſent Spirit is a great bleſſing, when Holineſs is ſo rooted and framed upon the heart, that God's Worſhip is their Element: the hearts of others, through Cuſtom, and ſupine negligence, abide at great diſtance from God; no little ado will raiſe them, nor will they be fetched in with many Calls; like a great Bell, hard to be raiſed: and as theſe have a greater unhappineſs, ſo they have need of more pains to fit them for God's Service.

The *occaſions* of ſome men will give them time enough to ſet their hearts in order, to ſtate their ſouls condition, and chafe themſelves into an holy heat; and for them to come with cold and dead hearts into Religious Duties, cannot be anſwered. The occaſions of others are ſo urgent and continual, that they have much ado to redeem time for Prayer, but can hardly ſet apart time for a ſet and formal Preparation; eſpecially when a man is ſurpriſed with an holy Duty, or in Prayer at meals,

meals, or the like: and therefore one Last may as soon fit all feet, as one particular Rule suit with every good Christian.

Answ. 4. The least measure of Preparation that is necessary for the ordinary Worship of God, is, *That the heart be recalled, and recollected out of the World, and made apprehensive or sensible of the Nature of that God, and weight of that work that you are about*; which if you can attain in a minute, or are of necessity straitned or surprized, you will be welcome to Heaven: but if you can easily order your time, or not easily order your hearts, and remand your thoughts, you venture on your peril; and if God be not merciful, and you penitent, you will carry away a curse in stead of a blessing. And so I conclude this Answer with *Heb.* 12. 28, 29. *Let us have grace*, (not only a gracious habit, but a gracious frame) *whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.*

Think it not much therefore to keep or get an heart prepared for the Worship of God. When *Ringers* set not in together, there is little but jangling in that Peal, but when they start all together, there is sweet musick; and so it is, when all the Con-

gregation set out, and take wing at once, it is musick for Heaven: whereas the heart that is unready for the duty, mostly rings discords in it, and spoils the harmony. And indeed, this unpreparedness of the soul doth make the duty ungrateful to the Worshipper; When a Friend comes upon you, and you are unready, no provision or rooms in readiness, how (comparatively) unpleasing is his visit, and distracted his entertainment? when as to him that keeps a constant Table, or hath made set preparation, the sight and conversation of his Friend is very sweet: So it is between our God and us; when the rooms of the soul are prepared, and *at our gates* (ready) *are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, laid up for our beloved*, how can we welcome our Maker on his own cost into our souls? whereas Christ himself hath but cold welcome, and distracted entertainment in an unprepared soul. Lift up therefore thy heart in the Porch of a duty, with *Psal.* 119. 37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way.*

SECT.

SECT. IV.

THE *fourth Cause* of Distractions in God's Worship is *Luke-warmness.* He that is intense in any thing hath few thoughts to spare. Distractions are but the idlings of the heart, he that runs, looks at nothing but the Goal; though he meet Passengers, or pass by Palaces, he is in earnest, and stops at nothing: it is he that walks at leisure, that turns his eye to every trifle, and descants on every Object, he is not in haste at all. Even so the zealous Soul, though he forgets not those things that are behind, yet reaching forth to the things that are before, presseth towards the Mark, he hath business in hand that concerns Eternity, he cannot stand to whisper with every Passenger, nor trifle with every Object. It is the luke-warm heart that is prone to that. He can pray to God, and dress himself at once, he can hear God and talk with men, speak about Heaven, and contrive about the Earth; and in a word, serve God and Mammon at a time. Good *Jacob* was little troubled with wandring thoughts, *Hos.* 12. 3, 4. when he had *by his strength power with God, yea, he had power over the Angel and prevail-*

ed, for he wept and made ſupplication. Tears are the beſt charms to chaſe away Diſtractions. While you ſweat, and weep, and pray, wandring thoughts will flee away.

As there can be no reaſon given for any ſin, (called therefore folly) ſo for this in ſpecial; for if the holy Work you are about, be worth the conſuming of your time, (which paſſeth in every Duty, and is moſt precious) ſure it is worth the ſpending your pains and diligence. He that loſeth his time in the Duty, and loſeth his ſoul by his luke-warmneſs in the duty, makes a mad-man's Match. For if the Sermon, Prayer, Chapter, be not worth thy labour, never attempt it; and if it be, never ſhrink, nor be indifferent about it. When you ſee a man freeze at his Work, it invites a Paſſenger to entertain him with talk. And a frigid attender upon God tempts the Devil himſelf to tempt him. Wherefore the Apoſtles, *Rom.* 12. 11. directs us to be *fervent in ſpirit*, while we *are ſerving the Lord*: not drowſie, but fervent in ſpirit, or *boyling hot*, as the word ſignifies. The buſieſt Flies will not meddle with the ſcalding honey, though the ſweetneſs entice them, yet the heat affrights

frights them. The baſe Flies of thy diſtractions will not moleſt thy heart, if it keep boyling hot in the ſervice of God. A warm and weeping Prayer is the right Holy Water, that ſcares away the Devil.

Now the beſt remedy againſt this Lukewarmneſs is, 1. Conſideration, and 2. Practice.

1. Conſideraction of the ineffectualneſs of a frozen duty, which ſeldom reacheth the Heart of God when it reacheth not our own. That *the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent* only *take it by force*; that ſuch duties neither pleaſe God, nor our ſelves, they mock God, and rather deceive than delight us. That ſome Prayer or Sermon muſt be thy laſt, and perhaps this preſent may be it. That it is an irrational thing, to bring a dead Sacrifice to a living God. That one ſerious and lively Duty does you more good, and leaves a more ſweet, bleſſed and active frame upon the ſoul, than an hundred heartleſs ſervices; and, in ſhort, That the Majeſty, whom you ſerve, loves *Adverbs*, and narrowly obſerves the How's and Why's of Sacred Worſhip: That *it is not a vain thing that you are about, for it is your life*, Deut. 32. 47.

2. Practice is the other remedy. To cure this luke-warmneſs in God's ſervice, frequent thoſe Lights that are burning as well as ſhining. Let us go to *Dedham* (ſaid the *Godly* in that time) to fetch fire, when famous Mr. *Rogers* was there. If you cannot hear a warming Divine, then read them, and be ſure to have ſome Books for the rouzing and heating of your heart, as others for clearing and inſtructing your judgment, unleſs the work of Sanctification be perfect already in your heart and affections, while it remains imperfect in your mind and judgment. Aſſociate alſo with zealous Chriſtians, borrow ſome of their heat, and lend them ſome of your light; and be not aſhamed to talk of God, Heaven and a Soul when you are together; you loſe the benefit of mens Graces, for want of broaching thoſe bleſſed Veſſels of Grace you converſe with. Eſpecially read the Scripture, which will inflame thee, and mold thee (being rightly uſed) into its bleſſed nature. I have known ſome, that before their private duties would meditate on a Verſe in the *Pſalms*, *Canticles*, or the like, and then run hot and lively into the preſence of God. And chuſe rather to be frequent and fervent, than long and roving in a duty. Shorter Prayers may ſometimes

time inflame, when long ones tire the ſpirits; and that way the antient Chriſtians in *Ægypt* uſed to take. And laſtly, do as holy *David* did, that carried ſuch a nature as thou doſt, be ever calling to God, as He who is at it eight or nine times, in *Pſal.* 119. *Quicken me in thy way, quicken me, and I will call upon thy Name:* and if He had need thus to fetch fire from Heaven, how much more have We?

Q. Were it not better to omit the Duty, than attempt it with ſuch a dull heartleſs frame as this?

A. 1. Omiſſion of a Duty will never fit us for the better performance of a Duty. *Luther* was uſed to ſay, The oftner I neglect, the more unfit I am: this is nothing but a ſhift of the Devil.

2. If thou doſt endeavour with thy utmoſt ſtrength and ſincerity, though thou be dull, it is better than to leave it undone: for as one ſin prepares for another, ſo one duty prepares for another. Fall therefore to work, and then God is engaged to help thee; never think neglects will mend it; one ſin never cures another.

By the upright uſe of theſe means, you will find the Holy Ghoſt, as it were, ſtretch

ſtretch himſelf on your cold hearts, and infuſe life and heat into you. And when you are ſoaring aloft *in the Spirit*, that cunning Marskman cannot ſhoot, and fetch you down by his diſtracting Arrows.

SECT. V.

THE *fifth Cauſe* of Diſtractions in God's Worſhip, is, *Worldy-mindedneſs*. An heart in Earth, and an heart in Heaven, are far aſunder. As long as the *Lark* ſoareth upward, ſhe ſings without danger of the Net; but ſtooping to gaze on the Fowlers deceitful Glaſs, ſhe is quickly enſnared. So is it with us, while we live aloft, we are ſafe; but when the heart ſtoops down, and grows worldly through the falſe Glaſs Satan puts upon it, then are we taken in theſe ſnares. *Ezek.* 33. 31. *With their mouths they ſhew much love, but their hearts goeth after their covetouſneſs.* Their faces look one way, but they row another; their eyes are up towards Heaven, their hearts ſet on the Earth, and graſping two affairs they proſper in neither. How ſhould he ſet his affections on the things above, that hath ſet them chiefly on things below? when as theſe two are directly oppoſite, *Col.* 3. 2. How ſhould

should the Soul, that Bird of Paradise, flie up to Heaven in a duty, when it is not only weighed down with the Lead of Natural Corruption, but intangled in the Lime-twigs of earthly-mindedness? they can never write on their Duties, *Holiness to the Lord*, that stamp upon their Coyn, *God with us.** Hence it comes to pass, that the heart is loth to come to an Ordinance, and then longs to go out again: how heavily do they go to Church, how lightly to the Market? for here the heart goes with them, and there it is left behind; and being forced into a Duty, because its treasure is in the World, the heart hastens to be there again, and *sicut piscis in arido*, is out of its element when in an Ordinance.

* Mr. *Willes* of perilous Times.

* See a plain instance hereof in that hearer, *Luke* 11. 13, 14.

We read of the *World set in a man's heart*, *Eccles.* 3. 11. and of an *heart set on the World*, *Psal.* 62. 10. Now how should God have any of such a heart? No, no, he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the Earth; there he can rest without weariness; of that he can discourse without distractions: but when he should turn to God, and flee to Heaven, this care knocks at door,

door, and that buſineſs whiſpers him in the ear, and there the carcaſs is left, but the heart is gone. The Prophet, *Hoſea* 4. 11. tells us, that *whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart.* It were very unlikely, that any man in the heat of thoſe ſins ſhould pray, or hear, or meditate aright; and it is much what as likely, for an heart that is taken away with the cares of this World, and drowned therein, to converſe with God, without innumerable wandrings.

Miſtake not, it is not the *World*, but *worldly mindedneſs* that is taxed; not the increaſe of riches, but the *heart* ſet upon them: And ſo no doubt a poor man may have his part of diſtractions, through his want of worldly things, as well as the rich through his abundance. He may have many a diſtracting thought what to do *for the World*, as the rich hath what to do *with the World.* And thus we ſee, thoſe things which were given for our welfare, prove our ſnare; and what ſhould hire us to ſerve God, keeps us from him. Which ſhews what good reaſon the wiſe man had to crave neither riches nor poverty, but convenient comforts, ſeeing the *weight* of the World diſtracts one ſort, and the *want*

of

of the World another ſort in the very immediate ſervice of God. Howbeit for the moſt part, the heart that is fulleſt of the World is emptieſt of God.

Now the beſt remedy againſt Worldly-mindedneſs, is *Mortification.* O get a Chip of Chriſt's Croſs, *Gal. 6.* 14. whereby the *World will be crucified to you, and you to the World.* So was *Paul.* As ſaith one of the *Antients*, *Paul* and the World were like two dead bodies, that neither embrace with delight, nor part with grief from each other. You muſt be dead, *I ſay dead*, to the World, if you mean to live to God, or live with him. A drunken Prayer, and a Worldly Prayer, are alike devout. Therefore, *Love not the World, nor the things of the World*, for ſo long the love of the Father is not in you; and if you love him not, how ſhould you pray to him? It would be an ill-favoured ſight, to behold all this Congregation in their Work-day cloaths here; how unpleaſing a ſight to God is it, to ſee us all with our Work-day hearts? Now that you may be rid of an earthly heart, faithfully make uſe of theſe directions.

1. Get Faith to believe the Report God hath

hath given of the World, that all that is in it, is but the lusts of the Fleth, the lusts of the Eyes, and the pride of life; a poor vain thing, not able to give the soul a Breakfast: this, all that have tasted it, and Christ also, do averr, and canst thou find that in it, which none ever found? will it do more for thee, than ever it did for any? Believe its vanity upon God's Word, ere thou try it by thy sad experience.

Get Faith to suck Vertue out of Christ's death to vanquish it. *For this is our victory*, 1 John 5. 4. *that overcometh the World, even our Faith.* Lay thee down with Christ in the Grave by Faith, and say then, What is the World? Get Faith to believe that eternal Happiness, which being once seen by that piercing Eye, would so disgrace the World, that all the comforts of it would not weigh a straw in comparison of it. If a man lived in the *Sun*, what a poor mote would the whole Earth look? He that lives in Christ in Heaven, by Faith sees all the glories of the Earth with a disdainful eye, and cries, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

2. You

2. You shall be helped against this disease, by deep consideration of the folly and misery of such a frame of heart. It is folly, for all that is gotten of the World, with the neglect of the Soul, invasion of Holy Duties, or by a carking worldly heart, comes to thee in wrath, will sink thee deeper in Hell; or if thou repent, is (most commonly) some way consumed, *& vix gaudet tertius hæres*, thy Grand-child will rue it. If we could penetrate the method of God's Providence, usually those losses you have in this Beast, or the other house, or the like, are the just value of what you have gotten by immoderate care, hard dealing with others, or unseasonable contrivance, when your Heart should have been better imployed. And then the misery of worldly mindedness, that it *pierceth the Heart through with many Sorrows.* Sorrow and pain in getting, sorrow and care in keeping, sorrow and grief in losing. The Heart is never at perfect rest. A man would not use his Horse, as a worldling doth his Heart, gives it no quiet or ease, and all this to no purpose at all, *Hab.* 2. 23. *The People labour in the very Fire, and weary themselves for very Vanity.* And may not the Consideration hereof be an effectual means to hate this

this humour? and when it is once hated, it is more than half discharged.

3. Have recourse to God by Prayer, and therein see and bewail thy former Madness; solemnly vow to restore their right to every Man thou hast wronged; rather part, like *Zacheus*, with half thine estate, than with thy whole Soul and Body; and earnestly cry unto the Lord, *to encline thine Heart to his Testimonies, and not unto covetousness*, Psalm 119. 36. Entreat your heavenly Father to give you an heavenly Heart, and if it come not at first asking, it is a gift worth going for again; humbly tell him, by vertue of that Covenant wherein you promised to forsake the World, (which you are now resolved to stick to) his Majesty is bound to give you a mortified and heavenly Heart, and you will never leave him, till you have obtained it.

4. Charm your Hearts from worldly thoughts, when you go to the worship of God, *Prov.* 16. 1, 3. *The Preparation of the Heart is from the Lord——Commit thy ways to him, and thy thoughts shall be established.* The Heathen left their shooes at the Temple doors, to intimate, that all earthly

earthly affections must be left behind you, when you go to speak with God. Do as that great *States-man* used, who would lay off his Gown, wherein he administred his Office, when he went to worship God, and say, *Lie there, Lord Cecil*; implying, he would take none of the cares of his Office into the presence of God. So when you go to Prayer, Reading, or Hearing, lay aside the World, and say, Lie there House, ye Fields lie there; lie there my Cares, till I have done with God. So *Abraham left his Servants and Asses,* Gen. 22.5. *below the hill,* and took up nothing but an holy Heart, and the materials of his Sacrifice with him thither. Keep still an eye upon your Hearts, and both *Watch and Pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.*

SECT. VI.

THE *sixth Cause* of Distractions in the Worship of God is, *Weakness of Love to Jesus Christ,* and consequently *to his Ordinances.* Love unites the Soul to its object: As Faith is the bond of our *mystical,* so Love is the bond of our *moral* union with Christ. The more love to Christ, the more life in his service, *Cant.* 8 6. *Set me as a seal upon thy Heart, as a*

seal

ſeal upon thy Arm: for Love is ſtrong as Death. Were your love more ſtrong, it would ſeal up both Soul and Body, and unite them firmly unto Jeſus Chriſt. Love marries the Heart and Eye to the Object; hence it is, there is not a diſtracting thought in Heaven, for there love is perfect: They ſee, and love, and ſing, and praiſe, and enjoy, and love, for ever and ever. The three Diſciples, *Matt.* 17. 4. had but an half-quarter glimpſe of that ſtate, but their love to their deareſt Lord and his preſence was ſo heightned, that the World was forgotten, *Jeruſalem* below, and all their Friends and fellow-Diſciples forgotten, and they undone to abide there. And if we could by the eye of Faith ſee him that is inviſible, and perfectly love him, O how hardly could we ſpare a by-thought in his preſence and ſervice! No, all the World would be forgotten, comforts and croſſes all ſleep together, while God and our Soul were converſing in an Ordinance.

Whence is it that moſt men can work and care perpetually, and no diſtractions divert them? Diſcourſe their buſineſs moſt orderly, without one alien thought? Drive on a bargain an hour together, and think

think on nothing but what is pertinent to their present business? Why they love what they are about, they like it well, and so tongue and heart go together, are wholly taken up therewith. The jovial knot do like their Company, and nothing shall distract them; the Servant comes about necessary business; the Master fumes that they will not let him alone; the Child comes, and then the Wife, but he frets, he rages. And why all this? why, he loves his company, 'tis his delight, his Heaven: Even so, the Soul that hath a strong love to a precious Christ, and his Ordinance presence, doth most heavily bear a distracting thought. The Devil cannot pluck him from *Christ*, but the Soul smarts, and when there is this smart at parting, that Soul will part but seldom. You have sometimes seen a sucking Child, that loves the Mother and the Breast most dearly; how loth is it to leave it, while it is hungry? how eagerly and angrily it seeks, and cries, and catches hold again? Here is love. *Christ Jesus* is the Spring of all Happiness, and his Ordinances are his Breasts, and he that loves the Lord Jesus with all his Soul, and all his strength; there he lies, and sucks at the Breasts of Consolation. This business knocks

knocks at door, that trifle tempts him; yet there he ſticks and frowns away all his Temptations. His love his ardent, *Pſal.* 1. 2. *His delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and then it follows, *in that Law doth he meditate Day and Night.* When Prayer is your delight, and not your task, then you will dwell therein with complacence, *Pſal.* 43. 4. *Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.* Children are ſubject to look off their Books, becauſe they delight not in them, but when they are playing, they do, *hoc agere.* But now when thy love is cool, and weak, thou loveſt Chriſt, and that is all; alas, there is little heart to him, the Soul comes heavily to him, and having little delight, and heavenly complacence in him, is moſt eaſily drawn off with any diſtraction; for where the Treaſure is, there will the Heart be alſo; where God and Chriſt are a Man's Treaſure, his Heart is with them. He wakes, and travels, and cares, but his Heart is with them; he runs through his buſineſs with all the haſte, that may ſtand with good ſpeed, that he may retreat to his Heart, which he left with God, and then holy Duties are the reſt of his Soul. And where the World, or Sin, are a Mans Treaſure, his Heart is with them alſo; he

reads,

reads, and hears, and prays, but his Heart is away: The leaſt noiſe, buſineſs, or whiſper can fetch him away, alas his love is cool, and a drop of Water will quench a ſpark of Fire.

The *Remedies* of this weakneſs of love to Chriſt and his Ordinances are,

1. Know him better; and meditate more on his real excellencies, *Ignoti nulla cupido.* Cant. 5. 9. *What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?* Why *ver.* 16. *His mouth is moſt ſweet, yea, he is altogether lovely*; or, as the *Heb. all of him is delights.* And then mark the reply, *Chap.* 6. 1. *We will ſeek him with thee.* The pure and Orient Sun is no more than a glow-worm to the Blind, nor the faireſt face than a Skeleton. It is the eye that muſt affect the Heart. Come then, open the Eye of Faith, and gaze on this heavenly Object: Sit down, and meditate who, and what he is; open but the ſacred Cabinet of his Attributes, every Box full of moſt ſweet perfumes: Each of his Offices pregnant with true and tranſcendent comfort. His Actions, his Paſſion, his Words, his Works, and above all, his heart, as full of Heaven as ever it can hold, and full *for thee:*

thee: The Breaſt full running into the open mouth of Faith, the *Fountain opened for thy ſins and uncleanneſs.* The Treaſures of his Grace free for thy ſupplies, what heart can freeze under ſuch diſcoveries? Nay ſtay, and look at him on the Croſs calling thee, arms ſtretched out to embrace thee, heart opened to let thee in, and deny him thy love if thou canſt. And if once your hearts be inflamed with his love, no ſmall buſineſſes ſhall keep you from his preſence, nor diſtract you in it.

2. Get Communion with Chriſt in his Ordinances. As he ſaid on another occaſion, *John* 4. 10. *If thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is —— thou wouldſt have aſked, and he would have given thee living water.* So I ſay, if thou kneweſt what Communion is with Chriſt, thou wouldeſt ask after Prayer, and long for ſuch opportunities. Why, what is Communion with Chriſt? Why, for thy Spirit to flie up into Heaven, among the Cœleſtial Spirits, and for Chriſt's Spirit to deſcend into thy Heart. And this makes an Heaven upon Earth, 'tis inexperience in this, that makes us cool to Chriſt and holy duties: Strangeneſs makes Company burthenſome. A King and a Beggar, a Scholar and a Clown, can-

cannot make Company of one another. So when there is a diſtance between God and the Soul, there is little longing for his Ordinance, nor true delight in it. Communion with Chriſt increaſes love, and love to him promotes Communion, *Cant.* 8. 1. *O that thou wert my Brother*, (ſaith the Spouſe) *the Son of my Mother*, (there is ardent love) *when I ſhould find thee without, I would kiſs thee*, (there is Communion) *yet ſhould I not be deſpiſed.* If you did but ſee his Power and Glory, *your Soul would be filled as with Marrow and Fatneſs, and your Mouth would Praiſe him with joyful Lips*, Pſalm. 63. 2, 5. One beam of his holineſs, love, or mercy, would ſo charm your Hearts, that you would be loth to part, and long to meet again; for how can it chooſe but tranſport a finite Heart, to ſee and feel the ſweeteſt properties of the Infinite God diſplayed before, and graven on it? When *Moſes* was in near Communion with God on the Mount, no thinking of meat, no cares about his tents below, but there he is ſwallowed up, and is content to melt in that Sun of light and heat, and come down no more; eaſie to count his diſtractions in the Mount. O who can ſee the Face of God, and not be raviſhed therewith! who can behold the beauty of the

Lord, and not chooſe to dwell in his preſence all the days of a mans life? Tis Communion with *Chriſt Jeſus*, that will warm your love to him, and when *the King brings you into his Chambers, you will be glad and rejoyce in him, you will remember his love more than Wine.*

3. Believe verily that you can be no where better, no where ſo well as in an Ordinance: This will content and pleaſe your minds in the Lord's ſervice, when you can be no where better; for what Company can be better than God's? The chiefeſt Good muſt needs afford the choiceſt Company; who can impart ſuch rare delights and ſweet content as he can, and where doth he communicate himſelf as in an Ordinance? Say, the World knocks at door, and would have thee away; can vanity entertain you like felicity? can the World produce higher pleaſures than he that made it? Would Sin come in and ſteal your hearts away? can the *chiefeſt evil* create thee ſweeter entertainment than the *chiefeſt good*? No, no you are beſt where you are. If the world could find you ſuch another *Deity*, ſomewhat might be yielded; or give you ſecurity, like *God*, of the reality, ſatisfa-

&c

ction and duration of its toys, and quarter-contents: but alas, there is no shew for this, you are best where you are. I am conversing with the *Lord of Heaven and Earth*, who can reward each Petition with a Crown. I am sucking at the Breast of the chiefest Good. I am in the next employment to Heaven, in a corner of Heaven. I cannot look off yonder lovely One, I will not leave, I must not come down. And this experience would enamour you of an Ordinance, and deliver you from diversions in it; *you will sit down under his shadow with great delight, when his fruit is sweet to your taste.*

SECT. VII.

THe *Seventh Cause* of wandring of the thoughts in the worship of God, is, *want of watchfulness*, Mat. 26. 41. *Watch and Pray* are most necessary companions, else *shall we fall into temptation.* In those sad times of Plague, the faithful Guard stands at the City Gates, and the dangerous passenger for all his importunity is stopped and turned again: Why? perhaps the Plague comes with him, and therefore the Halbard salutes his breast, he comes not there; the neglect of this care would

ſoon lay waſte the Land. So if any ſtraggling thought, perhaps with the Plague in it, ſhall enter at pleaſure into the Soul, eſpecially while the Lord's ſervice is in hand, no wonder that Soul lies waſte, *Lord have mercy* may be written on that door.

1. The neglect of watchfulneſs *before holy duties* cauſes diſtractions; and that is, by not heeding to order your affairs with diſcretion for God's Service. When you involve your ſelves in too much buſineſs, too much for your head, too much for your time, or too much for your ſtrength, then worldly thoughts will get place, you cannot help it. Or, when men are unadviſed in their buſineſs, in not chooſing a fit time for duties, and thereby your buſineſs and God's ſhoulder one another, and neither is done well. And therefore we are commanded, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *to watch unto Prayer.* As Satan watches to croſs and indiſpoſe us, by throwing ſome diverting and cooling occaſions, ſo is it our wiſdom to counter-watch him. Endeavour to time your buſineſs, and eſpecially your duties. It is the Character of a good Man, *Pſal.* 112. 6. that *he orders his affairs with diſcretion*, and renders every thing beautiful

beautiful in its time. For it is a true observation, that an indiscreet ordering of *Saturdays* business, hath great influence into the unprofitableness of the *Sabbath's* Ordinances.

2. Neglect of watchfulness *in holy Duties.* Our hearts, so far as unregenerate, are fetched into holy duties, as a prest Souldier into the Field: he is brought in against his will, no principle of courage, or love to his Country: he had rather be digging or idling at home. Now such a Souldier, what trust can you repose in him, if he be not watched? he steals away at every Lane's end, and in the midst of the Battle you shall be sure to miss him; a constant eye must keep him, or you lose him. 'Tis just so with our naughty hearts, if there be not a predominant Principle of Grace; it is not *choice* but *use* that brings them in, they would rather be carking or trifling about any thing, than busie in Prayer, and therefore if you neglect to watch them at every turn, no sentence end but they will steal away. For Prayer, without watching is but a meer complement. Where the tongue goes one way, and the heart another, that is a complement; and such is a watchless duty. It is

ſaid, the *Nightingale* in her ſweeteſt notes is apt to fall aſleep; to prevent which, ſhe ſettles her ſelf on a bough, with a Thorn at her breaſt, that when ſhe begins to nod, that ſharp Monitor may awake her. The holieſt Saint is apt to nod, and ſteal away in the midſt of his ſolemneſt duties; if God's Spirit do not *aurem vellere*, quicken his watch. Chriſt's own Diſciples, even *juſt after a Sacrament*, were overtaken for want of this, *Matth. 26. 40. What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* And if *they* fell aſleep at Prayer for want of watching, how can you keep cloſe to God without it, that have neither ſo good a Monitor without, nor ſo good an heart within?

3. Neglect of watchfulneſs *after Duties* cauſes diſtractions in the next that follow; People uſe to let looſe their hearts, when the Duty ends and unlace themſelves for eaſe; and then their thoughts take liberty. Which our deceitful hearts fore-ſeeing, no Cords will bind them to a good behaviour in the very duties themſelves; whereas, were there a conſtant watch kept up after our duties were done, and conſcience made of our thoughts all the day long, we ſhould contain our hearts in better order, while God's Worſhip laſts.

lasts. The fore-sight, and especially fore-tastes of Liberty approaching, sets the Soul madding thereupon, and we cannot keep it in. Besides, Religion is concatenated, hath a dependance one thing upon another, and it is unsufferable to take and leave where we will. If vain thoughts lodge with you at *other times*, they will visit you at your *business*, and if they be entertained, when *you have a mind*, they will press in when *you have no mind*.

The *Remedy* against this neglect is, To be *throughly convinced of the absolute necessity of constant watchfulness*, Prov. 4. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, as a Castle is kept from scaling, an House from robbing, or a Jewel from defacing, so the *Critick*; and all these are kept constantly, one hour's negligence would hazard any of them.—— And then *with all diligence* Heb. *with all keeping*, or as some, *above all keeping*. The eye we watch from harm all the day, the vitals we defend and guard with constant care; we know that a touch there is mortal; but above all keeping, keep the Soul: Be perswaded that watchfulness is as necessary as Prayer; you think, without Prayer you shall go to Hell, and I averr that without watchfulness

you cannot go to Heaven. Man's life in this ſenſe is a continued Ordinance. *Hoſ.* 12. 6. *wait on thy God continually*; not only at thy Prayers, but at thy Plough; while on your knees you are waiting on God, and when you riſe from your knees, you are going to wait on him in your Calling, and an unbecoming thought is diſpleaſing to him every where; he is ſenſible of an affront in the Kitchin as well as in the Parlour, and hates Vanity all the day long, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *Be ſober and watch unto Prayer.* Sober and watch; as if they that do not watch are mad. To *watch unto Prayer* is duty, as well as to watch *in it.* He that watches not to duties, doth not do his duty: a wiſe Chriſtian ſhould have always ſomething in ſtore for God; work and look at God, eat, and drink, and talk, and ſtill look at God, and at the Soul. This is to walk with God all the day long. As the careful *Bee* muſt needs leave her Hive, and flye abroad, but ſhe *dwells* no where elſe, ſhe lights on this Flower, and then on that, exhauſts their ſweetneſs, deflours them, and gets away; ſhe never reſts till ſhe return to her Hive, there ſhe reſts and enjoys her ſelf. So an holy heart muſt needs out into the World, and buſineſs muſt be done, but he reſts

at

at nothing, till he return to the enjoyment of God again, no Flower gives him content, no buſineſs, no company ſatisfies, but he retires to God, looks at him, and is lightned, and ſteps out again. This, Sirs, this is the Religion of Religion. I know it is hard, but it is poſſible, the Ice is broken for you, and the way is trodden. *Acts* 24. 16. *Herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offence.* It is my daily trade and buſineſs to keep my ſoul, that I neither offend God nor Man. If you will make a trade on't, you may do it. God never calls for duty, but helps in it. *Phil.* 4. 13. *I can do all things through Chriſt.* God and his ſervant can do any thing.

SECT. VIII.

THE *Eighth Cauſe* of diſtractions in holy duties is, *A beloved ſin.* When the ſoul eſpouſed ſome boſome luſt, the thoughts (be you never ſo buſie) will be warping towards it, though God himſelf look on. *Jer.* 4. 14. *O Jeruſalem, waſh thy heart from wickedneſs, —— how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* When wickedneſs is in the heart, vain thoughts will be in thy duties; they will enter, yea,

they will lodge within thee. A beloved sin is like a Biass on the Bowl, though you throw it out never so streight, yet the Biass will draw it off that way, do what you can: so is a beloved sin unto the soul; aim you with utmost skill, yet there is a secret Load stone in it, that attracts the heart, and makes that Prayer to end in Hell, that began in Heaven. Either Sin and you must be at a distance, or God and you will. The soul that is in league with sin, dare not come at God, dare not look at him, dare not think on him; and what must that man think on in a duty, that dare not think seriously on God? As that *penitent Father* speaks in his *confessions.* An unmortified soul (like the husband of a scolding wife, had rather be any where than at home, and makes many a sad bargain abroad, because he hath no comfort at home with his wife; so such an heart) chuses to be thinking of any thing rather than God; alas, matters are not straight between them, the poison of sin is in him, and he hugs that *abominable thing which God hates*; the Thief had rather go forty miles another way, than come near the Judge; God is an offended Judge to a wilful sinner, and he cares not for ever coming near him. Hence, *Heb.*

12 22.

12. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience.* He that comes to God with a true upright honest heart, being sprinkled from an evil Conscience, may draw near to God in full assurance of Faith; whereas guilt clouds, clogs and distracts the soul. So that you see both the guilt and power of a bosom sin, furnish us with too much cause of distractions. Sin, that would have all the heart; and God, he will have all or nothing. It is such an offering, that is a whole burnt-offering, that the Lord delights in. As no subject is capable of two contrary qualities, in the intense degrees, (as heat and cold may be both in the same hand, but not in their intense degrees) so the heart of man cannot entertain Christ and Corruption, Light and Darkness, except the one be loved and served superlatively above the other. *Psal. 66. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* God first stops his ear above, and then the sinners mouth below, that regards iniquity, that likes, loves, approves, or gives it rest and quiet in the soul. Indeed God neither regards him, nor doth such a soul regard God. He must *love* God, that is *lively* in his service. *Job* 27. 10.

27. 10. *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?* will he always? he may now and then send a thought that way in his special need, but not always: there is difference between converse and communion. One may have converse or traffique with a Stranger upon occasion, but communion is with a Friend, there is visits of pure kindness: an Hypocrite may have some converse, or trading with God for necessaries, but sweet communion, constant calling on God, and serious duties he can never enjoy and follow, that loves any sin before the chiefest Good.

The *Remedies* against a beloved Sin, are briefly these two:

1. *Consideration*: Sit down and think what real good this sin hath ever done thee. Think what hurt it hath done thee and others, and what fruit but shame and death it brings to any. Thy dearest sin is but sin, which is the worst thing in the World, and its masks and disguises being laid aside, more ugly than the Devil, more horrid than Hell it self. And think, the more thou lovest it, the more God hates it, and his rage and jealousie is encreased

creaſed with the increaſe of thy deſires. Think how many Prayers it hath loſt thee, how many Mercies it hath poiſoned to thee, how many ſmiles it hath clouded, beſides what unutterable ſufferings it hath inflicted upon Chriſt; and is preparing for thee in Hell. Conſider, that thou mayeſt have as much joy, happineſs and true comfort without it; and all converted ſinners confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt hath been better to them than all their ſins; and if you may have as good enjoyments, or better, to have Chriſt with them, and Heaven after them, will not make them worſe.

2. *Supplication.* Kneel down and pray with Faith, in the uprightneſs of your hearts, for ſtrength from above. All the ſtrength of Heaven is engaged by Prayer. He that heartily ſets himſelf againſt his Sin by Prayer, cannot but diſlike it, and when it is truly diſliked, its heart is broken.

Auguſtine complains, that when he in his unconverted eſtate begged a divorce from his Sin, his heart was afraid, leſt God ſhould hear his Prayers. Beware leſt your hearts ſecretly cry Spare, when your

your tongues openly cry, Lord, kill and crucifie my corruption: but do thou *bonâ fide* pull on Earth, and the Lord will *bonâ Spiritu*, pull from Heaven, and rend thy Sin and Soul asunder. Otherwise, as the Poets tell us of *Hippomanes*, that running with *Atalanta* for Victory, he conquered by throwing golden Apples down; which *Atalanta* stooping to take up, lost the Prize; so Satan seeing the soul running Heavenward in God's service, will throw down the gilded temptations of a beloved sin, stop it in its career, and hazard the Prize of eternal Glory.

SECT. IX.

A *Ninth Cause* of Distractions in the Worship of God, is, *Satan*. And this he doth *sometimes* more remotely, by throwing in some cross business before Duties, whereby the soul is unhinged: some Body, or Letter with business, just *before Prayer*; or some passionate distempering passages in the Family, whereby to lay matter for our discomposure, and wandrings in the following Duties. *Sometimes* he approaches nearer, and by presenting and occasioning objects to our senses in *God's Worship*, draws off the heart: He can

can ſtay *One* long from the Congregation, that *Another* may be diſtracted in obſerving him coming in, and ſo wounds two, and ſometimes twenty at a blow: *Satan* is not idle, when this and that Child are reſtleſs, and unquiet in the Family; whereby perhaps all in the Family loſe the Paſſages that would moſt profit them. He can create and further diſtraction by every Pillar and part of the ſtructure, and every perſon in the congregation; and can be content you read ſentences on the Walls, to hinder and divert your ſouls from the ſentences in the Pulpit. Yea, he *often* approaches nearer, and works immediately upon the *Fanſie*, upon which he can imprint a thouſand Notions, moſt ſtrange and incoherent many times, to ſteal the heart from God, for we are not ignorant (*the more is our ſorrow*) of his devices. Hence we have him, *Job* 1. 6. *When the Sons of God came to preſent themſelves before the Lord, coming alſo among them:* And being queſtioned, tells his buſineſs is to *go to and fro in the earth*, and *to walk up and down in it*; as if he walked only out of curioſity, or for ſome charitable end: But as our *Lord Jeſus* went up and down, *doing good*; this was his work from morning to night: ſo the Devil walks

walks up and down *doing evil.* He is in every Pew, at every Elbow, throwing in his Fire-balls, and enticing poor ſouls to commit folly with him; and when *God* is treating with the Soul about Heaven and Hell, then comes He and thruſts the World between, or ſome Vanity therein, to break the Treaty, and ſpoil that ſacred conference; ſo that of all Roads, no Road is ſo full of Thieves as the Road to Heaven.

And though to give the *Devil* but his due, we can make ſhift to be bad enough in an Ordinance without him, yet he waits there no doubt to make us worſe: what elſe ſhould bring thoughts then into our head, that have never come there, in a Month or Year before? who elſe ſhould ſuggeſt ſuch horrid atheiſtical thoughts, when we are pinched with convictions, and move us to queſtion all, when any thing purſues us? *Epheſ.* 6. 12. *We wreſtle againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in heavenly things or employments.* The Devil is wickedneſs in the abſtract, when we are about heavenly work. Never did the crafty *Cheat* watch and ſpy, how to defraud and ſlur the innocent Merchant, while he is receiving his Caſh, as *Satan* lies at catch in the

the Worship of God, to purloin from us the true Treasure, that should make the Soul rich. Especially that Prayer or Chapter, or Sermon, that should do thee most good, or most destroy his Kingdom, will he be most busie in. When the *High-Priest* was interceeding for the poor Church, then *Satan* stood at his right hand to resist him: hence our solemnest Duties, often have the saddest Distractions, and such as have no coherence nor reason for them; but Arrows, *Fiery Darts*, shot out of the Devil's own Quiver. What a sort of them have I in the very writing hereof, and what long Parentheses between every sentence, and you perhaps will not want, while you are reading, yea it may be, (as the body, when the humours are stirred by Physick, is worse, so) he will be busiest to divert and trouble your hearts, while the cure is working. But when your heart is prepared before, and watchful in your Duty, though yours be the sorrow, that you have the *Womb* that bare them; yet his will be the guilt, because he is the *Father* that begets them.

The *Remedy* against *Satan*'s distracting us in God's Worship, is, that of Christ's own prescribing, *Matth.* 26. 41. *Watch and*

and Pray, leſt ye enter into temptation. Stand upon your Guard, give no heed to his ſuggeſtions. As you run to the Water with the Bucket, to quench a ſpark of Fire in the Thatch; ſo drop a tear of contrition upon this ſpark of Temptation. Treat not with theſe thoughts, but diſmiſs them unregarded, and by ſome ſhort ejaculation call in thy friend, to countermine thine enemy. And ſtill watch and pray, and pray and watch, and always remember, that we have as much need of the *ſtrength* of Chriſt for aſſiſtance, as the *merit* of Chriſt for acceptance in every duty. And be ſure to caſt out his injections with diſdain and hatred. *Nam ſuperbus eſt ſpiritus, & non patitur contemptum.* He is a very proud piece and cannot endure contempt. The ſtronger is your reſiſtance, the longer he will ſtay away; and the more you hate his motions, the leſs mind he will have to offer them. The Devil is like that *Sanballat*, *Nehem. 6* 2. &c. that ſent to *Nehemiah*, who was buſie in the Work of the Lord; *And I* (ſaith *Nehemiah*) *ſent meſſengers unto them ſaying, I am doing a great work, ſo that I cannot come down; why ſhould the work ceaſe, whilſt I leave it and come down*

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to you? yet they sent messengers unto me *four times* after this sort, and I answered them after the same manner. Come, says Satan, let us meet and confer, here is a notion and here is a business, you must needs discuss this. Nay, say thou, I am doing a great work for Eternity. As that gallant *Painter*, being demanded a reason of his exact curiosity in his Work, answered, *Pingo æternitati*, I paint to last for eternity. So, I am doing a work for eternity, I am pleading the cause that runs for Life or Death; so that I cannot hearken to thee. Why should my great work cease, while I leave it and come down? Alas, this business will go no farther than it is lifted at; I am rowing up a River, if I trifle or nod a little, I go down again. I have a business on the wheel, that cannot be left a minute. If I look away, my iron burns, and I suffer loss. Yet he will send messengers over and over again, as *Sanballat* did; but still answer them after the same manner. Discourage him, and break his heart with thine obstinate resolution; *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.*

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SECT. X.

THE *Tenth Cause* of Distractions in our Lord's service is, *Vain thoughts at other times.* For,

1. *These displease and disengage the Spirit of God*; without whose help these Infirmities will croud in upon us. If you should lodge your *noble friend*, whom Love only moves to visit you, in the same room with a *nasty Beggar*; may not he take it for a plain affront, and refuse to come near or help you in your need? even so the *Holy Ghost*, your Noblest Friend will take it ill, to be packt into a room with base and beggarly thoughts and may justly deny that presence and assistance, which we have need of; and without God's Spirit helping us, we cannot pray as we ought, nor keep out Distractions with all our skill. *Rom.* 8. 26. *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities*, and these wandrings are some of those infirmities, which the Spirit must help us about, yea and will, if he be not disobliged; but it is far from likely, that we should have that sacred *Spirit* at our beck in Duty, whom we have distasted all the day long. How justly may He say, as it is, *Jer.* 11. 15.

What

what hath my Beloved to do in my Houſe? or, as the Margent, *what is to my Beloved in my Houſe, ſeeing ſhe hath wrought lewdneſs with many?* as if he ſhould ſay, I know not what to do with thee in my Houſe, or what thou haſt to do with me, having roved ſo extreamly with thy Heart from me, and been lewd with many. Remember it is the *Holy Ghoſt*, who hates a ſinful thought any time of Day. That Man muſt walk with God *in the Day*, that will have God draw nigh to him *at Night*.

2. *Theſe diſpoſe and naturalize the Soul to roving.* Habit is a ſecond Nature, and it is almoſt as hard to waſh an *Ethiopian* white, as to break an evil Cuſtom. *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his Spots, then may ye alſo do* (or think) *good, that are accuſtomed to evil.* If a man be uſed to ill Company, and linked in with them, though he ſometimes reſolve better, yet when they come, away he muſt go with them againſt his purpoſe. Perhaps you have reſolved againſt theſe vain wandrings in *God's* ſervice, but being uſed to them, they call at the door, and take you captive away againſt your Intention. And therefore ſet up

a constant watch against them, for Religion is linked together in the power and practicals of it. So that you must take all, or leave all; be a Christian always and altogether, or not at all. It is said of that *accursed Mahomet*, that he had used a *Dove* to come to his Ear, and thence to eat her commons; and so when the falling sickness surprised him, his Pigeon presently came to her repast, which he feigned to be the *Holy Ghost* or an *Angel*, that told him the mysteries of his Religion: My beloved, if these Fowls, these evil Angels be used to your Ear or Heart, they will come even in your most Cœlestial imployments, and divert and distract you: And hereby they become less strange, and things that are familiar to us, though ugly, are not started at; nay treble diligence will not dispel them, if you give them ordinary Entertainment. If a way be made over your Corn or Ground, and People used to come that way, it must be an higher Hedge than ordinary, that must keep them off. If vain thoughts have made a road over thy Heart, and use to come that way without controul, it must be a very high and strong Watch and resistance, that will turn them by, in Holy Duties, *Prov.* 25. 28. *He that*

hath

hath no rule over his own Spirit, is like a City that is broken down and without Walls.

3. *Theſe vain thoughts at other times make us apprehend it more impoſſible to conquer, and leſs ſinful to be conquered by them.* And when Diſtractions appear ſo powerful that there is no reſiſting them, or ſo harmleſs that they are not worth our trouble to reſiſt them, then is a floodgate opened to let them in: When once our courage is conquered, or our Conſcience is ſeared, we are quite undone. And thus you ſee that one ſin uſhers in another, and the looſneſs of our Heart at one time, prepares it to be ſo another. Even as you obſerve your Children (*'tis the compariſon of one that hath the skill of ſimilies*) they are more unruly before Strangers, or at times when they ſhould be moſt demure, than at other times: And you are then more aware and troubled at their ſhrewd words and geſtures, than the whole Year beſides: Alas, it is not meerly, that they are worſe then, but then you take more notice of it, it is then moſt obſervable and apparent, though their carriage be much at one: So it is with your Hearts; O (*cry you*) I am more peſtred

ſtred with fooliſh thoughts in Prayer or Sermon, than all the Day or Week beſides, then my Heart is worſt, when it ſhould be beſt. Alas! it is naught all along, it does but as it is uſed to do, only you obſerve it not at other times, and now obſerve it a little and find it out, but it is always ſo.

4. *Theſe do infect the Memory*, and imprint ſuch ſpecies and notions there, as offer and produce themſelves, when we are in the ſervice of God. And ſo when a *good Man out of the good treaſure of his Heart ſhould bring forth good things.* He ſtumbles upon the vain and unprofitable traſh, before laid up in his memory, to the grief of God's Spirit, and hazard of his own. The memory, you know, will moſt eaſily retain an impertinent ſtory, a filthy or fooliſh imagination a long time, and then when an idle Heart hits upon it, (though God himſelf looks on) that will run away with the Heart, and give both matter and ſtrength to a long, woful, and wandring Diſtraction.

How doth the active Fanſie in our ſleep ſometimes light upon ſome ſorry thoughts

thoughts we had in the Day, and take them by the end, and ſpin them out into a very ſinful Dream? and this, *Caſuiſt.* ſay we are reſponſible for; though it ſeem involuntary: Becauſe we adminiſtred matter for it, and remotely promoted it: So we ſhall be found guilty before God, even of our unwilling wandring in God's ſervice, becauſe we laid up for them before. If we brew for them, Satan will be ſure to broach them.

5. *Theſe idle thoughts*, at other times, *provoke God to give us up to our own Inventions.* As that dreadful word, *Hoſ.* 4. 17. *Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone.* Seeing he will be married to them, and forſake me, let him take them. If a man be reſolved upon Idols or any other ſin, God will not hinder him. So when he finds the Heart joyned, taken up, and pleaſed with vain thoughts; Good motions knock and wait, but are not accepted or heeded; come and knock again with double earneſtneſs, *How long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* But are not regarded, Sin and the Heart are making merry within; come and try once more, open now or never; And no anſwer, nay, now the Soul is joined to theſe things, *let him alone.* Sleep on now, and take thy reſt. Trouble him no more in his

vain Inventions. *So I gave them over*, Pſal. 81. 12. *To their own Hearts Luſt, and they walked in their own Counſels.* If they chooſe Hell before Heaven, let them take it. My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with Man. And now when the Soul is given up to a Vagabond Frame, then thy weak purpoſes, and faint watchfulneſs over it ſtand for nothing, but are broken like *Sampſon*'s Cords: And a deluge of all manner of impertinencies breaks in, and the Heart is proſtituted to all Temptations.

The Remedy againſt theſe idle thoughts out of Duties, is,

1. *A right underſtanding what a vain thought is.* Though it ſound ſomewhat harſh, that all thoughts are either good or bad, the matter of ſome being in it ſelf indifferent; yet if we conſider the Principle and Tendency of them, we ſhall hardly light upon one individual thought, but it hath either the ſtamp of Good or Evil upon it. It is certain, that a Wicked mans thoughts are all vain, as they come from him, neither flowing from a ſanctified heart, nor being directed to a Divine end. Ah poor ſinners, your Hearts are little worth, the imaginations of them are *materially* or *formally*

mally or *finally* evil, only evil, and that continually. The ſweeteſt words from corrupt lungs do ſtink in the noſtrils of them that ſtand by, and ſo your beſt thoughts coming from corrupt Hearts, cannot be right in the ſight of God.

And then for a gracious man, it ſhould ſeem every thought comes either from the Old Man or the New, the regenerate or unregenerate part; eſpecially if we conſider that there is hardly a thought but it may be reſolved ultimately either into Chriſt or Self. Let it therefore be concluded, that every thought that is not ſuggeſted, or directed by the Spirit of God, and that no way conduceth to the Glory of God, the good of your Neighbour, nor the good of your own Soul or Body, is a vain thought, vain or void, it might be ſpared, it ſtands for nothing, it is worſe than nothing.

2. *Be throughly convinced that vain thoughts are Sins*; They are not free from the Law of God, though they be free from the laſh of man. The *Rabbins* had a ſtrange Expoſition of that, *Pſal.* 66. 18.

The greateſt Good and Evil that ever was in the World, was firſt but a little thought. Mr *Angier*, p. 171.

66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my Heart, God will not hear me*; they read it thus, *If iniquity do but remain within the Heart* (be not produced into Act) *God will not regard it*; and ſo the *Phariſees* of the Decalogue, as if God had only forbidden the outward acts of ſin; but there is nothing more contrary to the Nature of God, or of his Law, or of the Souls of Men than this. I wonder how they could overlook all theſe direct paſſages in the Old Teſtament, *Lev.* 19. 17. *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart,*——*Thou ſhalt not ſay in thy Heart*, and innumerable ſuch. No, no, thoughts are words before God, *Ezek.* 11. 5. *I know the things that come into your mind, every of them.* What is ſin, but a deviation or tranſgreſſion of the Law of God? and this is a woful thing. Sin even in a thought is a woful thing; Nay, words and actions are as it were ſins at ſecond hand; the very firſt life, and freſheſt vigour of all ill, is immediately inſpired into the thoughts. Hence it is that *Peter* adviſeth *Simon Magus* to pray to God, if it were poſſible, that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him; as though *there* lay the

See Mr. *Bolton's* Diſcourſe of true Happineſs. p. 126.

the greateſt guilt, and deepeſt ſtain before God. Alas, one vain thought would bring down the higheſt Angel into the loweſt Hell: And that which would damn an Angel, will damn thee, except thou repent. If millions of Angels have fallen by a ſinful thought, and yet thou ſtandeſt under the guilt of many, thank Free Grace, and the Death of Chriſt for that; but yet thy ſin is ſtill as bad, and thou hadſt need to *cleanſe the filthineſs of the Spirit, as well as of the fleſh.*

3. *Daily wind up your ſpiritual Watch,* and renew your Covenants with God in Prayer. Draw all your parts and faculties into Covenant, *Job* 31. 1. *I made a Covenant with my Eyes. Why then ſhould I think upon a Maid?* Behold the bleſſed Purity of this Man's Heart! Neither Eye nor Thought of his ſhould wander after a Maid; and this he vows. Though good purpoſes are the ſhifts of Hypocrites, whoſe Covenants to God are like ropes of Sand, broken as ſoon as made; yet when they are accompanied with Repentance for former falls, and hearty endeavour for future performance, no better ſign of an upright Chriſtian. Know, that conſtant watchfulneſs is a Duty; that as

Nature hath provided a cover for the eye, ſo Grace hath prepared watchfulneſs for the Soul; and as it would be a fearful ſight to ſee an eye without a lid, it would ſoon be put out; ſo it is a fearful and dangerous thing to keep a Soul without its Caſe, without its Watch, *Prov.* 23. 17. *Let not thy heart envy* (or imitate) *ſinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long:* not only at Prayer-times, but all the day long. Be ſure that every morning you ſincerely and ſolemnly relieve your Watch, by new purpoſes and Prayers, and then when vain thoughts offer to come in, you may ſay, *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments.* And labour, that all your thoughts may hold weight with that excellent Scripture, *Phil.* 4. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any vertue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.*

4. *Repent thoroughly and heartily for them.* For as Humiliation without Reformation, is a foundation without a building; ſo Reformation without Humiliation, is a build-

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ing without a foundation, which the next wind of temptation will throw down. *To waſh the heart*, (mark, it muſt not be ſwept only) in the briniſh tears of Repentance, is the *way to diſlodge vain thoughts from within you*, *Jer.* 4. 18. If you felt the ſmart and bitter pangs of true Repentance to night for your vain thoughts, it would affright and mortifie the heart from them to morrow; you would have no mind to tamper with the Vanities that coſt you ſo dear: The burnt Child would dread the fire, and the freſh remembrance of the heart-ach you had for theſe gueſts laſt day, would bolt them out from coming in to day. If our ſins did coſt us in *David's* ſenſe, *broken bones*, we ſhould not ſo eaſily ſin again. If the Scholar after his truanting, ſtole to his place unobſerved and uncorrected, he will eaſily venture on his freaks again to morrow; but if he taſted the Rod, the ſmart he felt, will ſomewhat warn and keep him from ſuch follies again. Ah Sirs! our Repentance is eaſie, and our Confeſſions Complements; we forgive our ſelves, e'er God forgive us; we can lick our ſelves whole, without the coſt of a tear or ſigh, and then we are ready for a ſin again: He that finds it eaſie to repent, will not find it hard to ſin.

Verbal Repentance will never cure you of real ſins. It is your ſad thoughts that will prevent your vain ones, and idle thoughts are beſt excluded by keeping the heart full of good ones.

SECT. XI.

THe *Eleventh Cauſe* of wandering thoughts in the Ordinances of God, is, *a divided heart*, James 1. 6, 8. *For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the Sea, driven with the wind and toſſed.* The forlorn picture of a roving heart, carried up and down, as the wind of any temptation pleaſeth: The Cauſe, *verſe* 8. A double mind: *A double minded man is unſtable in all his ways.* The word ſignifies one that hath two ſouls; one that *ſpeaks with a double heart*, *Pſal.* 12. 2. Like that *prophane piece*, that bragged he had two ſouls in one body; one for God, the other for any thing that came. This man is the unſtable Man in God's ſervice, off and on with God, unfixed to his buſineſs, knows not what he would have, prays and unprays, wants Faith for the ballaſt of his Soul, and ſo is carried at the pleaſure of every Wave; and then *v.* 7. is the miſery of this frame. *Let not this man think that*

that he ſhall obtain any thing of the Lord; that is (as ſome) though God may anſwer ſuch requeſts out of his ſuperabundant mercy, yet ſuch a man can look for nothing. Though a diſtracted Prayer may receive ſomething, yet it cannot expect any thing from God; when a Man's ſupplication is a provocation, there is little hope: He that puts Treaſon into his Petition, hath little reaſon to hope for a good anſwer.

Now an heart may be ſaid to be divided in a duty theſe ways:

1. When all the heart is not engaged therein; as when the Underſtanding or Conſcience without the will or affections. This opens a Door unto Diſtractions, *Eph. 6. 6. Doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing ſervice as to the Lord, and not to men.* Half an heart can do nothing with God. A man may as well with one eye obſerve the Stars, and with the other meaſure the Earth at the ſame time, as at once diſpatch affairs with God and Man. Hereby both buſineſſes are ſpoiled: Conſcience of God hinders from any diſcreet and ſerious contrivance of any thing in his preſence; and tampering with the World,

provokes God, and hinders the affairs above. Our Lord Chriſt is moſt peremptory in that caſe: Ye cannot ſerve two Maſters, the one will be over-ſerved, *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon.*

2. The heart may be ſaid to be divided, when it is unfixed and indeterminate; wavering and unſetled. A Duty to God is ſhooting at an hairs breadth; if a man be uncertain and unſteady, how ſhall he hit the mark? *Pſal.* 57.7. *O God, my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will ſing and give praiſe.* Now the work is likely to go on. You cannot (it ſeems) ſo much as ſing a Pſalm, or give the Lord praiſe without this fixedneſs of heart. As you have ſeen the *Needle* in a Compaſs, waver up and down perpetually, till it point towards the North, then it is fixed and ſtandeth ſtill: ſo untill the Soul be compoſed, and bent directly towards God, it wanders, and trifles everlaſtingly.

3. The heart is divided by Hypocriſie, *James* 4. 8. *Puriſie your hearts, ye double minded.* As he ſpeaks to open ſinners to *cleanſe their hands*, ſo to cloſe Hypocrites, to *puriſie their hearts*, that is, be ſincere: An Hypocrite is a man of two hearts, and

and both little worth; one good one is worth a thousand pair of double hearts. Hence holy *David*, *Psal.* 86. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, else I shall have one heart to move me towards thee, and another heart to fetch me back again. One heart for God, and another for *Baal*, and so shall halt between them.

4. The heart is divided, when you perform not his service with all your might and strength, *Jer.* 48. 10. *Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently*, loosely, that unbends his bow, that unstrings his heart in the Lord's service. He that is studying with all his might, the least noise or word distracts him, and troubles him: he cannot admit or abide the least diversion: So he that is intent with all his might in God's service, cannot give room for the least by-thought. No, I am before the Lord, and I can do but little, but I will do what I can, *Psal.* 103. 1. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.* And this leads us to the Remedy for this Cause.

The Remedy for a divided heart, is, *get sincerity and seriousness.* And indeed the Soul that is sincere is serious. The real

Begga-

Beggar begs in good earneſt, he cries, he weeps, he heeds not the playing of the Children, the barking of the Dogs, not he; his wants pinch him, his ſtomach pulls and craves, nothing but meat will pleaſe him: There is Muſick perhaps within, and Company without, but all is one to him, he is not concerned therewith, he is hungry in good earneſt, and therefore ſtill he cries for bread: So it is with the upright and ſerious heart, he is really and deeply preſt down with ſin, and needy of Grace and Comfort; he ſees the reality of inviſible things; he fears the anger of *God*, and feels his broken bones, and therefore let the Devil, or the World, diſturb what they can, or ſuggeſt what they will, he plies his buſineſs, he muſt have pardon and Grace, and the light of the Lord's countenance: It is not the ſtirring of a Feather can unhinge him, for he is in good earneſt, *Jer.* 30. 21. *For who is this that hath engaged his heart, to draw nigh to me, ſaith the Lord?* Where ſits that man, that gives a heart to God? the Lord cries, who? O let every one that hears or reads this, cry out, *Lord, it is I*; and when the heart, the whole heart is engaged in a duty, then Work goes on. There is a vaſt difference between the pleading of an *Orator*, and the pleading

pleading of a *Malefactor*: The former hath perhaps a more ſmooth elegant and ſtarcht Diſcourſe, but he handles it with a light finger; a Friend, a fee would take him off; but the Malefactor that pleads for his life, he ſweats, he cries, he begs, the Judge interrupts him, but he goes on; the Jaylor ſtops his mouth, but he will proceed; all the Court cannot diſtract his mind from his buſineſs, his heart is wholly in it. And ſo it is with a ſincere and ſerious Saint: He can truly ſay, Lord, thou haſt more of my heart, than ever any creature in the World had; my heart is fixed, I am ſet upon this affair: The great matters I am about, I neither can live, nor dare die without them, and therefore blame me not to be buſie. It is the *dear* Prayer that prevails, the Prayer that coſts us *dear*.

SECT.

SECT. XII.

THe *twelfth Cauſe* of wandring Thoughts in God's Worſhip, is, *an opinion that there is no great evil in them*; which partly proceeds from that Notion, that thoughts are free, or at leaſt, that no ſin is really ſin, except it be voluntary, and theſe are without conſent; *partly* from our being uſed to greater ſins, which do widen the Conſcience to digeſt theſe leſſer ones, without any ſtraining: And *partly* from the commonneſs of them, being the ſnares wherein we are moſt frequently taken; and the oftner they walk thorow the heart, the leſs ſtrange are they there; the more familiar they are, the more apology we have for them; and ſo uſually it becomes no ſin, that we have a mind unto.

And now, when there is bred in the Soul, an opinion that there is no evil, or next to none therein; the heart is pleaſed with that, and merrily plays with thoſe baits, till by the hidden hook it is caught in the hidden ſnare of the Devil. To rectifie this miſtake

1. Somewhat muſt *be granted*: The evil

evil in theſe wandring thoughts, is not ſo great, as in many other ſins: theſe do not *vaſtare conſcientiam*, lay the Conſcience waſte, as ſome others, eſpecially thoſe roving thoughts, as are rather injected, than contrived; the matter whereof is good, not evil, and which are ſhort and and ſorrowed for: But who will ſwallow a Spider, and ſay, there is not ſo much poiſon in this as in a Toad; or break his leg, and ſay there is not ſuch danger therein, as in breaking the neck? Even ſo, it is a poor plea to ſay, theſe *peccadillo*'s, trivial things are not like Oaths, and Murders, and Oppreſſion, *&c.* But theſe are great enough to diſpleaſe God, to bind guilt upon the Soul, to prepare for greater, and bid fair for Hell.

2. Something muſt *be anſwered*, as namely, 1. That though our thoughts are free from the notice of men on Earth, or Satan in Hell, further then they are imprinted in the body or actions; though they are free from the puniſhment of humane Laws, yet are they not free from the Eye, nor Law, nor wrath of God, as you heard in divers inſtances before, and particularly in the caſe of *Simon Magus*, *Acts* 8. 22. And 2. That other Notion

is

is corrupt, that nothing is culpable that is involuntary: It is true, this doth extenuate a fault, but this doth not extinguish it: it is a less fault in that case, but it is a fault; for the Understanding may be depraved, as well as the Will; and we are really guilty in *Adam*'s sin, though we had no previous consent therein. It is a fault that we are capable subjects for such sinful injections, though we yield not to them; for there is something in us that incourages those attempts: the Angels meet with none of these. The Will in a sort lies dormant when we are asleep, and yet Casuists say, there wants no sin, even in our dreams; for the fansie and the memory may be corrupted, as well as the Will; and therefore it follows, these wandring thoughts may be *against God's Will*, though they be *besides our own*. And 3. For our accustomedness to greater sins, and frequency in those, that signifies little herein: for crimes do not excuse faults. The Stars are the same in the Firmament all day, though while the Sun shines, they appear not; when the Sun is retired, they will shew themselves: while your greater staring sins appear, these are nothing; but if ever a night of terrour come upon you, then each of these will shine in its proper guilt

guilt in the eye of Conscience. And then 4. The commonness of them adds to their sinfulness, though it take from your sense thereof. If your neighbour for a time break over your hedge, and tread your Corn, the matter is soon put up, it is but a trespass by chance; but if he daily use it, and make it his way, you think it's intolerable. So if a wandring thought stole in once a week, it were a less offence; but if they will transgress, and make a way over *God's* ground, spoil his Garden often in every day, this makes the sin the greater, though the sense of it be the less.

3. Something must *be advised* for cure. And that is, 1. A true knowledge, and deep sense of the Nature of Sin, whereby you will see, that no sin can be little; that there is more evil in the least sin, in a vain thought, than in all the Plagues and Judgements in the World besides. Hence, saith God, *Jer.* 6. 19. *Behold I will bring evil upon this People, even the fruit of their thoughts.* All the possible sorrows that can tear the Mind and Soul; all the sickness and sores that can be inflicted on every part of the body; all the mischiefs that can sink thy name and estate, (put them all together) amount not to that real

evil

evil that is in the leaſt ſin. For it is an offence to God, diſpleaſing him whom the Angels ſtudy to pleaſe, and would not offend for ten thouſand Worlds, *Pſal.* 51. 4. *Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned.* The greateſt evil in ſin, is, that it is againſt God; by it you provoke the higheſt Majeſty, diſpleaſe the ſweeteſt Nature, and offend your chiefeſt Friend. And if I know a little thing will offend ſuch a perſon, I am a wretch, for a little thing to offend ſo great and good a Friend. Might not *Adam* have argued thus, it is but an Apple, there can be no great hurt in this; what is this to breed a jarr between God and me? and yet yet we have found that little Figg or Apple a great ſin. Here was all, *God* was diſobeyed, his Will oppoſed, his Soveraignity and Mercy trodden under foot; and this is the nature of ſin: whereof, if the Soul have a deep ſenſe, it will excuſe no longer, but frighted at the hideous look thereof, flye even into the fire to eſcape it, *Pſal.* 119. 113. *I hate vain thoughts: but thy Law do I love.* I not only avoid them, but I hate them; I ſee a ſinning evil in them, I ſee a damning evil in them. I hate vain thoughts; not only wicked, wanton, revengeful, proud, or blaſphemous thoughts, but vain thoughts; empty thoughts

thoughts fill me with grief. Natural conſcience may abhor the former, but a ſoft heart can only oppoſe the latter. And there is the means he uſed; *Thy Law do I love*; he that loves a pure Law, cannot but hate a vain thought.

2. You muſt apprehend the evils, yea, the great evils that are in this ſin. For though we grant, there is more of poiſon in ſome other crimſon ſins, and in ſome diſtractions more than others, yet there is much evil in the leaſt of theſe; which on purpoſe to whet and ripen your moſt ſerious reſolutions againſt them, (and ſee they attain that effect) I ſhall now in the *ſeventh place* diſcover.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The Evil of Distractions.

SECT. I.

THE *Evil of Distractions*, is, 1. In their Nature. 2. In their effects. Behold the former in these demonstrations.

1. These distractions in God's Worship, are *sins against the first Table.* And these proportionably are ever greater than those against the second. Though the offence of them be properly against the second Commandment, yet they have a fling against every Precept of the first Table. For how doth he acknowledge God, that in his very Presence offends him? or how dost thou honour, love and delight in him, as the chiefest Good, when thou startest aside from converse with him, to parley with the World and Sin? There is the *first Commandment* broken. Do you worship him according to his Will, that thus worship him? If material Images be cast

cast off, and spiritual fornication committed, ye are still breakers of that Commandment. A graven Image in the mind, a worldly or wicked fansie there, where Christ should be, cannot but provoke him to be very angry. There is the *second Commandment* broken. And these manifestly break the *third Commandment*, being a palpable *taking his great Name in vain.* To speak of God, and think of the World: to hold discourse with him, and think of your lusts, is an high taking his Name in vain. As if the wife should be speaking busily with her husband, and at the same time looking at the Picture of the Paramour, what rage would this beget in herhusband's heart? To make the Name of God a cloak for the things, the nothings of the World, for the worst thing sin, is the saddest sacrilege; and for which he will not hold you guiltless, if he find you griefless. And then the *fourth Commandment* is broken by a plain rape, and theft committed of God's holy time; that which you destinate, at your kneeling down to his service, is purloined away by these roving thoughts, especially when they invade the Sabbath. For when you seem to give him much, in effect it comes to nothing; sift out the bran of your

wandring thoughts, and the flower of cordial ſervice will be next to nothing. And ſo your time is loſt, your duty loſt, and danger of your ſouls loſs after all. And thus you ſee the *firſt Table* broken at a blow: It is a ſad blow that breaks four Commands at once.

SECT. II.

THE *Second Evil* in their Nature, is, *That they are heart-ſins*, Pſal. 5. 9. *There is no faithfulneſs in their mouths, their inward part is very wickedneſs.* As wounds in the inwards are moſt dangerous, becauſe hard to come at and cure. Hence it is far eaſier to cure a ſwearer of his ſwearing, than a roving heart of its diſtractions. And as theſe ſins are more dangerous, ſo are they very diſpleaſing. The heart is *God's Acre*, the incloſure he keeps for his own walk and delight. He hath ſaid, *Prov.* 23. 26. *My Son, give me thy heart.* Now to injure him of his peculiar, to lay the filthy excrements of our ſinful diſtractions under his moſt bleſſed noſtrils (to ſpeak with moſt deep reverence and grief) to thruſt him out of his Manſion-houſe on Earth, the heart; this is no ſmall injury, affront, and unkindneſs. And ſuch

a

a *back-ſlider in heart, ſhall be filled with his own ways*, if he fill not the ſacred bottles with his tears. And they are more heavy to the Conſcience, in that they meet with no ſhame or trouble without, which is the ordinary lot of other ſins, but are begun and perfected in the heart within; and their guilt is more, becauſe their ſhame is leſs. And they do thereupon leave (as ſuch other ſins do) a deeper ſting of remorſe, and horrour of Conſcience, when the Conſcience is awake. There is much evil in theſe, *Ezek. 6. 9. I am broken with their whoriſh HEART, which hath departed from me.*

SECT. III.

THE *Third Evil* in the nature of them, is, *That they are ſins in the ſpecial Preſence of God.* We read, *Ezek. 8. 16.* of God, ſhewing the Prophet with infinite wrath, *five and twenty men at the door of the Temple of the Lord, between the Porch and the Altar, with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the Eaſt, and they worſhipped the Sun towards the Eaſt.* This he highly reſented, that in his Temple they ſhould have their faces towards the Sun, and turn their backs on him. This

is

is the manners of a roving heart. In God's own preſence he turns his back on God, and his face to the things under the Sun, and thoſe he worſhips. O infinite patience! that turns not ſuch a ſoul into a Pillar of Salt; yea, throws it not into a Pit of Brimſtone! *Ezek.* 5. 11. *Therefore, as I live, ſaith the Lord God, ſurely* (ſee how he binds it with double ſtrength) *becauſe thou haſt defiled my Sanctuary with all thy deteſtable things, and with all thy abominations, therefore I alſo will diminiſh thee —— A third part ſhall die with the Peſtilence.* Which of all thy deteſtable ſins, but thou haſt had a fling at in the Sanctuary and preſence of God? now a proud, now a wanton, then a Worldly thought. Ah, ſays God, I cannot bear it. He that provokes me to my face, ſhall feel it. Few think theſe ſins have brought the Plague, no more than the *Corinthians* did their unworthy partaking at the Lord's Table. In his ſpecial preſence he looks at thee, as I may ſay, with both eyes, *Pſal.* 90. 8. *He ſets all our iniquities before him,* but he places theſe *ſecret ſins in the light of his countenance.* O this is an evil thing, and a bitter, that thou ſhouldeſt provoke the Lord to his face, and that his fear doth not aw thee, *Jer.* 31. 11. *Yea, in my houſe*

have

have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord; this dies it with a double die. *I am God Almighty walk before me, and be perfect*, Gen. 17. 1. To believe that you are sitting, standing, kneeling before God should make you perfect. How demurely doth the Child stand before his Father, the Scholar before his Master? and shall the Child of God only forget himself? the poorest Scholar, before the best of Masters? Famous was that execution, *Levit.* 10. 12. Two of *Aaron*'s Sons came with their Censers, *and offered strange fire BEFORE the Lord, which he commanded them not, and there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died BEFORE the Lord.* Behold the dreadful hand of God! before him was their sin, before him they were punished. Lord! how terrible art thou in thy holy place! If no place will deter them from sin, no place shall be a sanctuary to them from Judgment. What are distracted thoughts but strange fire? and a strange punishment may the workers of Iniquity have, if timely Repentance prevent not.

SECT. IV.

THE *Fourth Evil* in their Nature, is, *That they are ſins about the moſt ſerious buſineſs.* The moſt grand affairs under the Sun, are tranſacted in an Ordinance. I have read of a *Noble Man* of this Nation, that when his Cauſe of Life and Death was trying, though he had a pardon in his pocket at the ſame time, he was irrecoverably ſentenced, being that while aſleep; he was ſleeping, while the Judge was ſentencing, was not this a groſs neglect, and did not he (trow ye) bite his nails, and beat his head, that could not watch, when his head was in queſtion? Sinner, thy head, and life, and ſoul, and all are in queſtion: thy eternal happineſs is handling, or thy dreadful ſentence paſſing, and is this a time to trifle and ſtraggle away from God? If you ſhould come to the elbow of a *Counſellor* pleading at the Bar, much more of one impeached for *Treaſon*, and tell them, ſuch a Companion hath ſent for them to the Tavern, or that ſuch a Cock is like to win the Game, the Cattle broken into ſuch a Field, ſuch a Game at Cheſs likely to be loſt;

loſt; with what diſdain and indignation would they turn back ſuch a meſſage, and cry, Is this time to trouble me with theſe things? when the very hearing of ſuch an errand may loſe my cauſe, or hazard my life. Are Cocks, or Corn, or Companions, parallel to immortal ſouls? What are theſe to the things between God and me? If the dead muſt not be buried when Chriſt calls; nor a man ſtay to take leave of his friends, how greatly doth he treſpaſs that runs riot after toys and ſins, when the great God calls and calls again? We have a clear inſtance, *Luke* 10. 41, 42. the Preacher was at *Martha*'s houſe, and ſerious in his Sermon: *Martha* (good Woman) was highly cumbred, and diſtracted with much ſerving: *Mary* ſate at her Saviours feet, and heard his Word. Saith *Martha*, I think it much that my ſiſter muſt have all the Dainties, and I all the Diſtractions: Maſter rectifie this inequality. Ah, ſaith our Lord, *Martha, Martha, thou art cumbred,* (or as the word ſignifies, *diſtracted*) *about many things: But one thing is needful.* *Mary* is imbarked in a moſt neceſſary affair, and worldly cumber is improper for an heavenly buſineſs. She that is working

for her ſoul, hath work enough at that time. Salvation, Eternal ſalvation! Eternal ſalvation of ſoul and body; theſe are not things to dally about.

SECT. V.

THE *Fifth Evil* of theſe rovings of heart, is, *That they are ſins of Hypocriſie.* And there can be no little evil in the ſin of Hypocriſie. What is Hypocriſie? *Matth.* 15. 7, 8. But the *Honour* of the lips, and the *Diſtance* of the heart, *vox & præterea nihil*, as it is ſaid of the Nightingale, a ſound of words, and no ſoundneſs in the heart, that is, Hypocriſie; of all ſins moſt odious unto God and man. And though the purpoſe of the heart be wanting to make it formal, and full Hypocriſie, yet a cuſtom in theſe will beget that at length, and he that uſeth to *lie in jeſt*, will come at length to *lie in earneſt*, Hoſ. 11. 12. *Ephraim compaſſeth me about with lies.* Oh how often may the Lord ſay over us, Theſe People compaſs me about with lies. What a Generation of Vipers are here! like the Viper that is ſpeckled without, and poiſonous within! *Moſes* took a Veil, when he

he spake to *Israel*, and put it off when he spake to God. But the Hypocrite doth quite contrary, he shews his best to men, his worst to God, but the Lord sees both the Veil and the Face; and it is hard to say, whether he hates more the Veil of dissimulation, or their Face of wickedness. This, 'tis a disappointing of God, in a sense a deceiving of him, *Mal.* 1. 4. *Cursed be the deceiver, that hath in his flock a Male, and voweth and sacrificeth to God a corrupt thing.* Yea, saith God, you have in your flock a Male, you can be serious when you will, but a corrupt thing (it seems) will serve my turn; you disappoint me, you deceive me, you appoint a meeting between an heart and me, and here I come, and the heart is gone; you knock at my door with great earnestness, and when I come, the heart is gone: you are Deceivers, and deserve my curse. If this be not repented and reformed, such deceitful hypocrites must carry away no blessing of mine but a curse.

A Prayer though but of forty words sincerely made and felt every syllable shall prevail more with God, than a long Oration with half an heart: and the meanest

Sermon heard with a prepared, humble, and attentive heart, shall receive a greater blessing, than a better Sermon with a worser heart: for God is a Spirit, and shews do work nothing with him: he that seems to serve him, and doth not, exasperates him the more. An eye to Heaven, and an heart for Hell; an humble knee, and a haughty spirit; a serious posture, and a frivolous soul, are abominable to the Lord.

SECT. VI.

IN the next place, the Evil of Distractions is seen in the *Effects*, whereof these are some.

First, *They do alienate the heart from holy Duties.* When we miss of God, we have small mind to his service again. It is the comparison of a learned Divine, when there is no marrow in the bone, we quickly throw the bone away; even so when the sweet enjoyment of God is not found in an Ordinance, which is lost by the roving heart, we shall ere long cast away that Ordinance, except shame or custom restrain us. Now when the soul cares not for Prayer, or other Ordinances, it is a sad effect:

effect: the Lord may say to thee, with more right and reason, than *Dalilah* did, *Judg.* 16. 15. *How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?* What love is that without an heart? where the affection is, there the cogitation will be also. I may truly invert this, and say, where the heart is not before, there love will not come after. Let all the soul be seriously bestowed in any duty of Prayer, Singing, Reading, or Hearing, and you will be loth to leave that duty, and long to be at it again. O the sweetness therein, and love thereunto! *Psal.* 119. 93. *I shall never forget thy Precepts, for with them thou hast quickned me.* Oh when shall I come and appear before God! O that every day were a Sabbath, then should I be well, as said that famous * Instance of Practical Piety. Hence with a gracious heart, one duty prepares, and gets a stomach for another. But you shall find, when the heart is out of tune, and beating about the bush, and not half quarter of it with God; O then it is the most wearisom imployment in the World! A man had rather thresh than pray, that hath his heart in the Barn,

* Mr. *Bruen* of *Bruen-staple-ford*. Cestr.

when he is in Prayer. And there is no lively desires, or longings of soul to that business, wherein he felt so little of God. Hence it is so hard to get a worldly Family together to prayer; Alas! the duty is a distraction to them; when they come they still leave their hearts behind them; you can make them no pennyworth of an Ordinance, whose hearts do usually run out of an Ordinance.

SECT. VII.

THE *Second Effect* of Distractions, is, *That they much afront the Majesty of God.* It was an high afront to God, *Act.* 7. 39. that his people, after they had had experience of him, yet in *their hearts turned back into* Egypt. This is the wisdom of a roving heart; Come, say they, we like not this blessed presence, nor work in our hearts: let us walk into the World again, *Ezek.* 11. 21. *But as for them, whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things, I will recompence their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.* Here one detestable thing offers it self, and there another: for every thing that draws the heart from God, its chief good

good, is therein detestable: Now when *the heart walks after them*, that is the right vein of distractions. Where the heart walks after every trifle, that puts up finger, he shall have enough of his ways, saith the Lord. Must I stand for a stale, when he is aiming at other matters? must the great God wait on a simple Worm, till he can be at leisure to speak with him? shall the worst of evils be courted, while the chief of goods is slighted, and yet even then pretend his service? As if some miserable Scullion at the Court had made great means to possess the King with his low condition, and when the King is come to speak with him, he lies sweeping the Sink, or scouring the Spit, and there lets his Prince wait on him to no purpose; may not he justly say, when I come next to meet you, you shall know the difference between the Majesty of a King, and the Sordidness of a Scullion. Just so, poor soul, do thou and I, obtain leave to approach our heavenly Lord and King, and when he expects the heart earnestly to solicite her great affairs, she is roving away, and bestowed in the Kitchen, or worse, while the great and holy God stands waiting to be gracious. What Fa-

ther but would take it for a great indignity, to see his Son stopping his ears, or whistling, or playing with Flies, while he is reading his last Will and Testament to him, or giving him order about his greatest affairs? And is not God greater than a Father? And can he with his honour, abate such a Child his punishment, if he do not humbly cry him Mercy, and study to offend no more? Though divine Vengeance be not always so visible, as a Parents Rod, yet it is as real and more heavy. A poor man cannot escape, with his affronts of a great God.

SECT. VIII.

THE *third Effect* of Distractions, is, *That they hinder the benefits of an Holy Duty.* God seldom thinks of those Prayers that we think not of our selves, *Isa.* 64. 7. *And there is none that calleth on thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee:* The Lord counts such Prayers as none at all, when a man doth not stir up himself to his business, *& non entis nulla est operatio.* That which in God's account hath no being, can have no working. The benefits of Ordinances are many

many and great: They are like the *medium* to sensation, as the air to the eye, or ear; there is no seeing nor hearing without it: So are Ordinances to the Soul: They are the Conduits to convey God's Grace to us, and our desires to him: When a dirty distraction gets in, the Conduit is stopt, and the Soul starved. And in this Sense God's Name (which should be most sacred and dear to us) is most palpably taken in vain. When we use a great solemnity to no effect, *magno conatu nugas agimus.* The wind and tide to serve, and yet the Soul to sleep; the Mariner to be at Dice or Cards, till the opportunity be lost, what a great evil is this, when our Voyage is for Life and Death? If you could by the expence of one serious hour gain a *Lordship*, would you not be intense and earnest that hour? Would you not fume at the Company, that would divert you, and disdain any ordinary business that would interrupt you? O stay, and let me alone this hour, for I am busie. Now by the cordial management of one serious hour in Prayer, Reading, Hearing, or Meditation; you may, yea shall infallibly gain at least one grain of Grace, which is worth more than a Kingdom, yea, than

a whole World. And is not that an evil thing, and bitter, that then interrupts you, and fruſtrates your gainful imployment, whereby it comes to paſs that you get nothing? Pearls are dealing, and you get nothing. Orient Graces in the Hand of God, ready to give, and you none of them; who would entertain, that can be rid of ſuch Companions!

SECT. IX.

THE *fourth Effect* of theſe Diſtractions, is, *That they deprive the Soul of its pureſt Comforts.* The higheſt, trueſt, and pureſt joys and comforts, meet the Soul in the ſervice of God, *Cant.* 2. 3, 4. *I ſate under his Shadow with great delight.* (There are then delights, and great ones too in the ways of God) *And his Fruit was ſweet to my taſte.* (If thou haſt any ſpiritual taſte, his Fruit will be ſweet to it.) *He brought me to the Banqueting-houſe:* God's Houſe is his Banqueting houſe, and every Ordinance is a rare Feaſt to the Soul that doth ſpiritually manage it: Now theſe idle wandrings of the Heart; firſt, by their *Diſturbance*, then by their *Guilt*, do damp and deprive the Soul of the Comforts thereof. Juſt as a black Cloud

Cloud doth hide from you, the bright and warming beams of the Sun. How often have you mist of those joys of the Holy Ghost, sweeter than the Musick of the Spheres, by these vain thoughts? with what sweet content do you look back on a Duty, where Communion hath been held between God and you? And what a folly is it to lose an hour, and neither reap pleasure nor profit by it?

There is fatness in God's House, and Rivers of Pleasures with him, but he shall have *leanness in his Soul*, that gives way to these, and of all those Rivers drinks not a drop, not one drop of true comfort and pleasure. O what an Heaven do negligent sinners lose! how many gracious smiles, blessed tokens, Coelestial raptures, the dainty Diet of Angels, and all through the idleness of the Soul! *Psal.* 63. 5. *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, (I am full, brim full of joy and comfort, my heart runs over, and) *my mouth shall praise thee with joyful Lips.* Now all these gleams of sweet comfort and refreshing, are stoln away by these thievish Distractions. For an upright heart, and an attentive, would

would seldom want the sweet comforts, that usually accompany sincerity and seriousness. He that can keep his meditations fixt on the right Object, his meditation shall be sweet; and where should the Lord make his Servants joyful, but in the House of Prayer?

SECT. X.

THE *fifth Effect* of Distractions in the Worship of God, is, *That they grieve away the Holy Ghost.* It is true what the blessed *Apostle* hath said, *Romans* 8. 26. *The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities*, and so helps against these, when they are but infirmities, mourned for, and striven against, but when they are contracted habits, then they grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. The Greek word in that Scripture, signifies *to take and heave up a thing over against you*, to heave with you. I but now, if our Spirits instead of helping, shrink away, and heave none, this Promise will do us no good. If we leave the business wholly to God's Spirit, without our *diligent co-operation*, he will leave it to our Spirits, without his *Divine co-operation*. The Holy Ghost will dwell only

ly with an holy heart, and these Idols in the heart, do heavily trouble that sweet Spirit, *Ezek.* 14. 3. *Son of man, these men have set up their Idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, should I be inquired of at all by them?* Read on, and you will see what consequence this is of. What are worldly and sinful distractions, but Idols in the heart? what are abused objects of the Eye or Ear, but the stumbling-blocks of iniquity before the face? and how can the Holy Spirit dwell in such a soul, or abide such doings? *Luther* somewhere says, that the Holy Ghost dwells not in *Babel*, but in *Salem*; that is, delights not in the heart, where is nothing but confusion, (that is the meaning of *Babel*) but in the heart where there is quiet, peace, and freedom, (that is the meaning of *Salem*) *In* Salem *also is his Tabernacle, and his dwelling place in* Sion, *Psal.* 76. 2. The unkindness offered is very great: as if you should earnestly importune some noble friend, to accompany and help you in some arduous affair, and he comes to go with you, once and again: and still, when you should come along, and promote your own business, you steal away about some trivial matters,

matters, and leave your noble Friend in the lurch: This is the very case, you humbly importune the Holy Spirit of God, to help you in the service of God; and he most graciously comes to help you, but one distraction or other charms away your heart, and the Holy Ghost is left alone. And thus the Holy Ghost is so oft sinned *against*, till at length he is sinned *away*. And thus you see the evil of Distractions, which is the *Seventh Point* to be handled.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Cure of Distractions.

SECT. I.

AND if there be such great evil in these Distractions, and evil effects of them, what shall an *an upright heart* do to be rid of them: I say, *an upright heart*, that inquires for means, to use them, and craves a Plaister not to look at, but to apply to his sore. And art thou thus resolved, that readest these lines? For us to spend our skill, and you your time, without full purpose to practise, is labour in vain: Nay, it will harden your hearts here, and increase your condemnation hereafter. You will deceive your selves, and disappoint us, if you rest in hearing, without doing what you hear. Well then, are you resolved unfeignedly to take the Lord's Counsel, for the destruction of your Distractions? Stop a little and resolve—And now let me put that

that queſtion to you, *Jer.* 30. 21. *Who is this that hath engaged his heart, to approach unto me, ſaith the Lord?* Who is this, who will do it? who is this thus well adviſed? that hath *engaged*, not only made a proffer, but *engaged*, and that *his heart*, to approach unto God, and where in this Congregation doth that man ſit, or ſtand, that out of a deep ſenſe of the hatefulneſs and hurtfulneſs of this ſin, doth now engage his heart and Soul to uſe all means againſt it, and that in the uprightneſs of his heart? The Lord your God ſees who yields and cries out, *Through grace I am reſolved.* Well, on that Condition I proceed to Direction.

I uſe the Remedies againſt the fore-mentioned Cauſes.

I. *Diſpel the Cauſes fore-mentioned*, and uſe the Remedies preſcribed againſt them; and here if you be in good earneſt, you will look back and review them, and the helps adjoyned, and beg of God, as you read them, *In this Lord pardon and help thy Servant!* a man of ſmall skill, may eaſily ſtop the ſymptoms of diſeaſes, as the preſent pain in the teeth, or the like; but he is an Artiſt, that removes the cauſes of them; and

and it is more easie to turn off two or three of these vain thoughts, than to heal the soul of the *Thought-evil* in the causes thereof. If these remain, Atheism, Unpreparedness, Lukewarmness, Worldliness, and the like in the heart, all the rules and receits under Heaven, will never cure you of Distractions. For there will still spring up continual supplies from these corrupt causes; as the lopping of the boughs will still have new sprouts coming, until the Root be stocked up; and therefore with faithfulness and resolution, set upon all those Remedies that have been prescribed. Beg of God to dry up the spring, else your damming up the streams will do no good. When the causes are dispelled, the cure is wrought.

And here is a plain discovery of an Hypocrite in heart; if some light easie receit will help him in any case, he may set to it; but if he must go about, and take pains; if the way of cure be any whit intricate, or difficult, then he throws it up, never will go to the bottom of his business: Whereas the upright heart doth but desire to know what to do, what is God's method and way, and then long, or short, hard,

hard, or easie, he never disputes, he demurs not, but falls to work, he knows every inch he goes, he gets advantage, and *in keeping of God's Commandments, there is great reward.* The speediness of his Cure he desires, but the soundness of it he insists on, and counts no *trouble* in the *Cure*, like the *Evil of his Sin.* Are you resolved in this? else it is to no purpose to proceed? To stumble at the threshold, presages. But if we be clear thus far, I proceed.

SECT. II.

II. BEwail *your former failings in this respect*; this will divers ways conduce to your amendment.

1. *Morally*, being an *Argument* that you really dislike the sin, and *the condition* of God's pardon thereof. The ordinary *Lord have mercy*, doth herein fall short of pardon, because it is not spoke in tears: If God did but see a man grieve for his sin *, a little ado, a few words should get forgiveness. The Publican had but a short *peccavi*, nor *David* upon his dreadful fall; but they

* No man was ever kept out of Heaven for his confessed badness, but many have for

they were words that were felt, they were heart-deep, they swom in tears, each word fetcht a drop of blood from the heart. And God was well pleased with them in Christ. When *Antipater* had written a large Letter to *Alexander*, against his Mother *Olympia*, his answer was, Dost thou not know, that one tear from my Mothers eye, can wash away all her faults? so one penetential tear from a Believer's eye, can perswade much with God in Christ for the pardon of his wandrings. But the most embroidered Phrases, without this Christian grief, work not with God at all. *Lachrymarum lingua disertissimè loquitur*— If Christ Jesus himself did sue for pardon for an impenitent sinner, he would not be heard. But when your Conscience is toucht, and the heart melts and bleeds for your faults herein; now, saith God, I see yonder man cannot live *with* a wandring heart, and therefore he shall live *without* it. I will never see him drowned in his distractions, that is thus drowned in tears about them; if he really *dislik* them, I will really *dispel* them.

their suppos'd goodness. Mr. *Capel.*

And then again, till their guilt be pardoned,

doned, our hearts are usually desperate; like a wicked spend-thrift, while hopeless of a discharge from all, treasures up sin unto sin, till that dreadful Pay-day come, the day of Judgment. Whereas, when sin, this sin is truely grieved for, the Holy Ghost doth ever bring a Pardon in one hand, and a Plaister in another; at the same time, to clear the guilt, and cure the disease. Oh, saith the soul, I am defiled, I am wounded in my flight to Heaven, I am disappointed in my affairs, my God is angry. I have sinned just then, when I should have scored out my sins. I have sinned against my remedy, and how shall I be cured? Oh was there ever such a rotten back-sliding heart! such a *Cain*-like Vagabond cursed frame? what place but Hell is fit for that heart, that cannot rest in Heaven? Ah Lord! I wonder that the end of my Prayer, is not the beginning of my punishment. Though these be but small like the Sand, yet being many as the Sand, how can I stand under them? I am ashamed, yea, even confounded for these reproaches of my duties. Nay, then says God, that hearkens behind the Curtain all this while, *Is Ephraim my dear Son? is not he a pleasant child? I will remember him*, I will have mercy upon him. When thou

thou art ripe for Hell in thy own eyes, then art thou ripe for grace and glory in the eyes of God. No man ſhall ever be overborn with a ſin he hates. Go my bleſſed Spirit, that haſt melted him, and mend him; that haſt ſoftned him, ſtrengthen him: he that laments his ſin, ſhall never languiſh under it. The ſacrifice of a *broken heart* doth pleaſe him, though the ſacrifice of a *broken Chriſt*, alone doth ſatisfie him.

2. *Diſpoſitively*, grief at Heart doth help forward the cure of Diſtractions, and that by ſoftning the Heart, and ſo fitting the ſame for the Impreſſions of God's Will. When the Wax is melted, you may turn and mold it, which way you will: So when the Soul is melted by grief for theſe Sins, God Almighty may eaſily be heard, and his counſel will be taken. And alſo this godly ſorrow (as was before obſerved) doth ſo afflict and make a mans Heart to ake and ſmart, that he will take ſome pains to prevent the like anguiſh again. When they knock at door, you will ſay, O theſe are they, that coſt me dear at ſuch a time: *Non emam tanti pœnitere.* I feel yet the ſad Impreſſions of my late Affliction for them:

I found a pardon no easie enterprize, nor Repentance so pleasing a Potion to brew for it again. I would not for all the World, (much less for one vain thought or two) nor for a thousand Worlds together, be under that anger of God, nor feel one drop of his scalding Indignation, which I have perceived for these Offences. O Sirs, where godly sorrow is in the Power of it, what carefulness doth it work? what Zeal, what Indignation, yea, what Revenge? It makes sin lie like a Mountain upon the Soul, musters up all the aggravations of sin, and sets them home on the Heart. O to sin in an Ordinance! against such a God! in the midst of my greatest business! after such conviction! Vows and Promises of exactness before him! To offend both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost at a clap! Heart of Stone, dost not melt? Yea, to offend the *Angels of Heaven*, which Holy Spirits turn away their Faces at our Vanities in the Assemblies; yea, and offend the *Angels upon Earth* (God's Ministers) while that which cost them most serious pains, is spoken to the Air! to wound my own Soul in the act of curing it, and increase guilt, when I am getting it cleared! to play the Hypocrite before the Face of God, the

Judge of Heaven and Earth! O wretched man that I am! O my sin is exceeding sinful! lend a Tear, O rend an Heart! O thou most high! *A broken Heart to day will be a good preservative against a wandring Heart to morrow.*

SECT. III.

III. *ENgage the Holy Spirit of God in thine assistance,* John 15. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing.* Supernatural work cannot be done, without supernatural help: You may and ought to do what *a Man* can do, that is, compose your selves, and guard your senses, but you cannot do that which only *a God* can do, that is, fly up, and fix your Hearts in Heaven, *Rom.* 8. 26. *We cannot pray for any thing* [for matter] *as we ought* [for the manner] *but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us.* The Greek word signifies, the Spirit *over and above* steps in and helps; or, as *others,* makes vehement intercession for us. We climb up the Ladder as well as we can towards Heaven, but alas it wavers, no stability till the Holy Ghost hold it at the top, and draw, and lift us up, and then we get a sight of Heaven. And you have resolved

be like, and been secure of a good frame, but *Prov.* 28. 26. *He that trusteth in his own Heart, is a Fool*; you have found no fixedness or liveliness in your Spirits without the assistance of God: He that prays aright, must *Pray in the Holy Ghost*, Jude *v.* 20. This also quickens and heats the soul, whereby there is no room, or leisure for distracted thoughts.

Hereby the Soul is carried streight up to God, and stays at nothing on this side Heaven; yea, by the Spirits blessed Assistance, *Every thought is brought into captivity to the Obedience of Christ*. O blessed frame! when every thought is captivated to obey Christ; there is none can deal with our Spirits, but the Spirit of God. When the *Word* comes in the hand of the Spirit, there is no avoiding it. Then the reading one *Chapter* can convert, as that *Joh.* 1. did the learned *Junius*: yea, of one *verse*, as that 1 *Tim.* 1 15. did Mr. *Bilney*; yea, one sentence can comfort the Heart, as that, *Isa.* 57. 15. did the afflicted Conscience of one, that nothing else could satisfie; thereby the Soul is carried up, as Mr. *Tilleman* the Martyr was in his Devotions, so that he saw or heard no Body,

Body, till after long search, and great noise, his Persecutors took him up from his knees. The Heart is so carried upward to God, that all the World looks as inconsiderable, as a mote or atome at that time, and not worth the thinking on: And is entertained with that sweet content, that it cannot wish to be any where else; and therefore a by-thought is as unwelcome, as base company to him that is busie with Nobles.

Beg therefore of God, with earnest importunity, at the entrance of every Ordinance, for his Holy Spirit; and he hath said, *Luke* 11. 13. *He will give his Spirit to them that ask him.* Say, Lord, if thy Spirit go not with me, let me go no further. For as the *Intercession of Christ* is absolutely necessary for your acceptance, so the *Intercession of the Holy Ghost*, is necessary for your assistance. The Spirit it self also making Intercession for us with sighs, that cannot be uttered. Promise your heavenly Father, that you will never willingly disoblige or grieve away his Spirit again. Art thou dead? cry, *Quicken me*, and *I will call upon thy Name.* Is thy Heart roving? cry, *Unite my Heart to fear thy*

Name. Humbly plead his Promiſe, that he will put his Spirit and *fear into your Hearts, that you ſhall never* (and if never, then not in his ſolemn Ordinance) *depart from him*; and obſerve the gracious gales of the Spirit, and when they claſh not with the Rules of his holy Word, lay hold on them, and fall to Duty. It's beſt rowing below, when the wind blows fair above. When thy Heart is warm and in ure, then do thy buſineſs throughly. And beware of grieving him between times; let there be a coherence between Prayer and Practice: Let your whole Life be of a piece, leſt he withdraw when you have moſt need of him. And remember that to *grieve the Spirit* oft, is the way to *quench the Spirit*, and to quench the Spirit oft, is the way to do *deſpite to the Spirit*. That is a rare expreſſion, *Gal.* 5. 25. *If ye live in the Spirit, let us alſo walk in the Spirit*: How far is this Phrase from vulgar apprehenſion or feeling! To live and walk by the conduct and quickening of the Holy Ghoſt, this is the Life of a Saint. And then he that walks in the Spirit, prays alſo *in the Spirit*, and *watches thereunto*, Eph. 6. 18. Whereby thoſe airy darts of the Devil, that would conquer the ſtrength of a Man, are

cruſh'd

cruſh'd and chas'd away by the ſtrength of a God.

SECT. IV.

IV. *Believe the Preſence of God.* The Eye of the Maſter, makes the Scholar buſie. If his Eye be off the Scholar, the Scholar's Eye is off his Book, *Pſalm* 16. 8. *I have ſet the Lord always before me, becauſe he is at my right hand, I ſhall not be moved:* Elſe your Hearts will be moved, and removed too upon every motion. And therefore Faith, which doth realize inviſible things, and preſentiate an inviſible God, is of great uſe in every Holy Duty, *Heb.* 11. 6. *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that God is.* He muſt as fully believe that God is preſent, as if he were viſible, that thou art incompaſſed and involved in the preſence of God. If thou go forward, he is there; if backward, thou mayeſt perceive him; on the left hand, there he doth work, though thou canſt not behold him: He hides himſelf on the right hand, that thou canſt not ſee him: *Yet he knoweth the way that thou takeſt*, Job 23.9,10. This is his common preſence: But then in an Ordinance, there he

is in the *midst* of his People; there he looks over Heaven and Earth as nothing, and to this Man looks he, that's poor, and contrite, and trembles at his Word: And therefore, when you pray, you must not only speak, as speaking *of God, but to God.* It's slighting a Prince, when we deliver a Petition, and look another way; we bid our children look at us, when they speak to us, and so should we at God; who is not far from every one of us in his Ordinances. There he is with his Host about him; and though 'tis above us to determine whether his Angels are imployed to conduct his Word to us, or our Prayers to him; yet it's certain, that they attend the great *Jehovah*, and never more willing, than in an Ordinance; being transported with joy at a sinners conversion, and most pleasantly feasting on our pœnitential tears.

It's true, God is always, and every where with thee, with those more common Attributes of Immensity, Power, and Providence; but in his Worship, there he is also present by his Grace, Mercy, Holiness, and Efficacy. His common presence may be compared to the Sun in a cloudy day; it is in the Sky, we have great benefit by it,

it, we ſhould die without it: but his ſpecial Ordinance Preſence, is like the Sun breaking out of a Cloud in a Summers morning, that diſcovers atoms, warms our bodies, and refreſheth our ſpirits. Even ſo the common preſence of God upholds the world, in him we live, move, and have our Being, and the belief that *God is every where, ſhould perſuade us to ſin no where.* But now the ſpecial preſence of God in his worſhip, that like the Sun breaking out, inlightens the mind, warms the heart, and melts the moſt rocky ſoul. Hereby God doth, as it were, ſhine directly upon us; ſo that to trifle or ſin before him, is a crime intolerable. The name of every place, where God is rightly worſhipped, is, *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there. Thy cloſet, *The Lord is there* between thy chair and thee, and canſt thou ſhift from him? thy bed-chamber, *the Lord is there* between thy bed-ſide and thee, and canſt thou turn from him? by the fire-ſide with thy Family, the name of that place is *Jehovah Shammah*, and wilt thou ſleep? In the Aſſembly, *the Lord is there*, and what are all the Gallants there, in compariſon of him? O therefore hear and look at God, and pray and look at

God, meditate and look at God, ſing Pſalms, and ſtill look at God. It was *Hagar*'s ſaying, *Gen.* 16. 13. *Have I alſo here looked after him, that ſeeth me? And ſhe called the Name of the Lord that ſpake to her, Thou God ſeeſt me:* O call the Name of the Lord that ſpeaks to thee, and the Lord to whom thou ſpeakeſt, Thou God ſeeſt me. Keep thy Eye upon him, as he keeps his Eye upon thee; find a fairer Object, and gaze and ſpare not; but while there is none in Heaven or Earth deſirable like him, let nothing in Heaven or Earth diſtract thee from him. The lively ſenſe of this, will charm the Heart exceedingly, and we ſteal from Duty, becauſe we ſee no One there. It's ſaid, *Prov.* 20. 8. *A King that ſitteth in the Throne of Judgment, ſcattereth away all evil with his Eyes*; that is, his very Countenance ſhould read ſuch a Lecture of Juſtice, Temperance, Chaſtity, and Piety, that every ſpectator ſhould fear to do otherwiſe. O then how ſhould the preſence of God ſo inchant the Soul with that holineſs, goodneſs and ſweetneſs therein, that not one thought could be ſpared from ſo lovely an object!

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The full and clear viſion, and fruition of this preſence of God, doth ſo eternally raviſh and content the ſoul in Heaven, that they would not look off the face of God for a thouſand Worlds; no, though all the Kings of the Earth in their greateſt triumph, ſhould paſs by Heaven gates, and the Earth's utmoſt glory with them: A glorified ſoul is ſo full of the preſence of God, that it would not ſpare one minutes look to ſee it all. It is ſaid of one *Theodorus*, a Martyr, that in all his tortures he ſmiled, and being asked his reaſon, anſwered, that he ſaw a glorious youth wiping the ſweat off his face, whereby he was infinitely refreſhed. If thou couldeſt but ſee by the eye of Faith, the bleſſed face of God ſmiling on thee, and with the handkercheif of his Love wiping thy ſweat and tears away, thy heart would be glad, and thy glory rejoice, and thou would'ſt ſay, Lord, it's good, yea it's beſt for me to be here. Go not willingly from him, without a ſight of him: *Moſes* had few diſtractions when he ſaw God face to face. The actual faith of a Saint ingages the actual preſence of God. *Drexelius* tells us of a viſion of an holy man, and

behold in the Temple, an Angel at every man's elbow, that was at prayer: He that prayed with malice in his heart, his Angel wrote his petitions in Gall; he that prayed coldly, his prayers were written in the water; he that prayed with diſtractions, his ſuits were written in ſand; and he that prayed in faith, his Angel wrote his petitions in Letters of Gold. The moral whereof at leaſt is good: If thou would'ſt believe that every word ſpoken by thee, or to thee, is written, with what care and conſcience would'ſt thou pray and hear? And be ſure, there is one among you, that takes notes of all, who will give to every man according to his works, whom to ſee and feel in an Ordinance, will quit you from Diſtractions.

SECT. V.

V. LAY *a Law upon your ſences.* Beg of God to ſanctifie them; as they are all Penſioners to Satan by nature and complotment, ſo bring them all into Covenant with God, that ye may be ſanctified in ſoul and body, and ſpirit. Give them to him, uſe them for him. It is ſaid, Prov. 17. 24.

17. 24. *The fools eyes are in the ends of the Earth.* Any new face that comes in, any antick garb, any noise about, every head that moves, every leaf that stirs, commands the eyes and heart of a fool, but that while, Prov. 4. 25. *Let thy eyes look streight on, and let thine eye-lids look streight before thee.* Compose thy eyes in that devout and heavenly posture, that whatever falls out, thou mayest *hoc agere*, keep to thy business without wavering. For the heart is used to *walk after the eye*, Job 31. 7. To the undoing of the soul.

It is a precept among the *Rabbins*, that if a Jew be at prayer, though a Serpent come and bite him, yet he must not stir, till he hath done his duty. Satan that old Serpent will be nibling at thy heel with one vain suggestion or other, but go thou through with thy business, and let God alone with him.

In Prayer then, fix thy *eyes* Heavenward, and let nothing divert them, till the prayer be done. This will shew that thou would'st lift thy heart thither, if thou could'st, and will prevent many an impertinent distraction, that comes in by the eye.

If any deride thee for this, doubt thou not of good company, Psal. 123. 1. *Unto thee do I lift up my eyes, O thou that dwellest in the Heavens.* Let your *ears* be as good as stopt, to every thing, besides your work. And the lifting up your craving *hands*, will not be unprofitable to this end; for you will find them to flagg, when the heart knocks off from its business, whereby you may be advertised to come in again, Lam. 3 41. *Let us lift up our hearts WITH OUR HANDS unto God in the Heavens.* And let your prayers be *vocal*, if it may be, for the voice both helps to fix the thoughts, and raise the affections the want whereof we discern in meditation.

In hearing of God's Word, let the *eye* be chained to the Preacher with the greatest attention and reverence; as if you saw an Angel in the Pulpit, or Christ himself. And beware, lest your needless complements to men, be interpreted a neglect to God. 'Tis small manners to be complementing the King's Servants in his Presence Chamber, till you have done your homage to the King. Do your work with God, 'tis time enough to perform your civilities to men, when that is done. Look then

then to God, from him is thy expectation, with him is thy buſineſs, Luk. 4. 20. *The eyes of all them that were in the Synagogue, were FASTNED on him.* And therein alſo, let your *ears* be only open Heaven-ward, Lord! to deal with thee I am come, and thou ſhalt have all, my ſoul, and body, and all.

And here I cannot but digreſs a little, but it is to cure a more criminal digreſſion, which is that frequent *Abuſe* of *Whiſpering* and talking to one another, in the ſervice of God, which except it be upon ſuch inſtant *indiſpenſable* buſineſs, as cannot be ordered before or after the Ordinance, is a ſin in an high degree, and that

1. Becauſe it brings a *guilt and diſtraction upon two* at once. If a vain thought there, be ſo evil as you have heard, how criminal then is this, that involves you both, yea perhaps occaſions a diſtraction to twenty more, that obſerve you? And the guilt of all their vain thoughts on that occaſion will be charged on your account, according to the equity of that Law, *Exod.* 21. 23.

2. Be-

2. Because this hath more of *Affront* in it. Thy heart testifies to God's face, that thou dost despise his presence. Who but an impudent *Renegade* would, while the King is laying down terms of mercy and honour to him, be talking and laughing with his companions at some uncouth Courtier that comes in? and who but an implicit Atheist shall be whispering with his neighbour about any thing, while the King of Heaven and Earth is treating with him about Eternity? You hold it no piece of good manners, while any man is speaking to you, especially if he be your superiour, to neglect him so far, as to turn from him to discourse with another; nay, if the most necessary business call you away, you apologize for your diversion, and crave pardon: And shall you dare while your Maker is in conference with you, to confront him with an open parle with others? This is an high affront, if you consider it well.

3. This hath more *offence* in it. An offence to the Preacher, that hath taken much pains to prepare that, which you will not take pains to hear, or else imply,

it.

it is not worth the hearing. An offence to the Congregation that ſees it, who muſt needs, if they fear God, be troubled at ſo publick a fault. An offence to the Angels, that, while they ſtoop down to look into the Myſteries opened in the Church, ſee you ſlight them ſo notoriouſly: An offence to your own ſouls, that perhaps in that moment miſs of what would moſt have done them good. O therefore, Chriſtian Reader! mourn for thy miſbehaviour this way, and amend it for time to come, leſt God refuſe to treat with thee, that trifleſt thus in thy treating with him. Remember, 'tis work enough for a *poor man*, to converſe with a *great God*. He needs no other buſineſs, to fill his hands.

And then *in Meditation* you muſt alſo compoſe your ſenſes. There ſhut your *eye*, and *ear*, and ſequeſter your ſelf wholly to the contemplation of things inviſible. The leaſt ſight or ſound will here diſtract: Any thing, yea nothing will throw us off the hinges in this duty; indeed it is ſaid of *Iſaac*, Gen. 24, 63. *That he went forth in the field in the evening-tide to meditate.* And in that kind of meditation, where

where the rise and subject matter is sensible, there the senses must be active and busie; but I think, in other cases, the outward senses may stand aside, and let the soul alone without them: we are never more sensible, than when we use no outward sense at all.

And lastly, *in communicating* at the Lord's table, there fix both your eyes on the sacred elements, until the eye have affected the heart to feel what Christ felt, to die in his death, and looking on him whom you have pierced, you mourn for him with a superlative sorrow: And then look at those sacred signs with an eye of Faith, till vertue come from that brazen Serpent, to cure your sin-stung soul. Look yet again till thy heart be inflamed with love to him, till he cry in Heaven, Cant. 4. 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my Sister, my Love, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes, with one chain about thy neck.* He that spends his eye there to observe his neighbours, to criticize upon their gestures, hath little to do, and less to get in that sacred Ordinance. And then lay a Law upon thine ear, and taste, and touch, for most of the senses are gratified

tified and uſeful in this Ordinance; that nothing may interrupt thy Communion with Jeſus Chriſt at that time. For there the utmoſt ſtrength of body and ſoul are ſcarce enough, to gain, and feel, and do, what is there to be gain'd, and felt, and done.

And in general, be not treacherous to your ſelves. Satan *without you* can do no great matters *within you*: your ſenſes you can command, your hearts not ſo well. Be faithful in what ye can, elſe if you could order your very hearts, you would not. He that will not do what he can, would much leſs do what he cannot.

SECT. VI.

VI. THE ſixth Cure of theſe Diſtractions, is, a watchful *reflection of the Soul* upon its ſelf, *and ejaculation* unto God. It is ſaid, Eccleſ. 10. 2. *A wiſe man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart is at his left.* Is not this the meaning of it? That a wiſe good man hath his heart ready, can ſpeedily ſerve him, inſtantly recoil upon himſelf; but a wicked fooliſh man, his heart is aukward and unskilful,

skilfull, a left-hand-heart, unweildy and unready for any good work. O get then a dextrousneſs of heart to bolt in, and break the ſinful knot of your vain imaginations. That a diſtraction may not ſit ſo long on the heart, that it hatch, and breed yet more of the kind, and ſo ſwallow you up in condemnation. It is ſaid, Gen. 15. 11. *When the Fowls light*, Abraham *drove them away*, not when they were ſitting or feeding upon the carkaſſes, but as ſoon as ever they lighted, we muſt not give place to theſe for a moment. Mr. *Dod* adviſeth us to ask our ſelves often theſe two queſtions. 1. *What am I?* 2. *What am I doing?* We are well, if we can well anſwer theſe two queſtions. If thou canſt anſwer, *I am a Child of God*, and *I am doing God's Will*, it will ſtand thee in more ſtead than if thou could'ſt anſwer all the queſtions in *Aquinas*. We read, *Nehem.* 4. 17. That in the building of God's houſe, *every one, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon*: Work and watch, work and fight was the guiſe of them. And he that will edifie in God's houſe yet, muſt do the ſame; hear and watch, and watch and pray, and fight, and ſtruggle, and pray ſtill.

This

This Hill we climb inch by inch: One may tumble into Hell, but the ſtrait gate muſt be ſtriven at. Let Conſcience then perform it's part, and ſpeedily glance into the heart with all fidelity. *Abraham's* Fowls came without ſending for, and yet would not go away without driving. You cannot hinder a Thief from coming by the houſe, but you may from quartering with you, at leaſt with any quiet and approbation.

And it is good to caſt off theſe wandring thoughts with *an Ejaculation* to God, elſe the deſtruction of one, will prove the generation of another. When Satan caſts in his *injaculations*, lift you up your *ejaculations*. This will ingage divine ſtrength, and work God your friend. Do as they, *Act.* 19. 34. When they thought *Alexander* would ſpeak evil of *Diana, they cried, Great is* Diana *of the* Epheſians. So when theſe are injected, then breath forth into ſome heavenly ejaculations, ſo will you croſs the tempter, and inſtead of loſing, gain. * Send up thy Prayer in a *Parentheſis*, like that, Pſal. 119. 34. *Turn away*

* Cry unto God, Lord wilt thou ſuffer thy Slave to abuſe thy Child before thy face, while he is on his knees for a bleſſing? Dr. *Harriſon.*

mine

mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way—— Forsake me not, O God, my strength—— And take not thy Holy Spirit from me—— Awake O North wind, and come thou South blow upon my Garden. These darting desires sent up with faith, will weaken the habits of corruption, and affright Satan from his suggestions. This resisting the Devil will make him flee from you: As the golden spikes were set on the Temple to keep the Fowls from thence; so will these, being conscionably used, keep off vain thoughts from lodging upon your sacrifices. Up therefore and stir up thy self, by this means to save thy sacrifice from being devoured, and thy Soul polluted. Alas, we are daily told, and we feel it, that the heart is deceitful above all things; if a wary eye be not kept over it, you will find it sometimes in the bed of lust, sometimes on the Pinacle of honour, and often digging in the world, and yet salve up all with an *I thank God, I am not as other hearts are.* If ever you be rid of these guests, you must do, as good *Barnabas* advised them, *with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord,* Act. 11. 23. There must be heart, purpose of heart, full purpose of heart, and then you will cleave unto the Lord. *Object.*

Object. But I am suddenly slipt from God before I am aware, and when I see it, and resolve anew, yet e'er five sentences be past, I am gone again.

Answ. This shews the sad corruption of our nature, and should therefore humble us: And this argues also the contracted ill disposition of the Soul: when a disease hath such recidivations and returns, it speaks that it is too much radicated, yet in this case you must not give out, nor throw down your watch; you must not compound with sin, because it's hard to sue out an *ejectione firmâ*, no peace must be made with *Amalek* for ever: If the Devil and your unregenerate part be unwearied in their assault against you, you must be unwearied in your resistance, and die *se defendendo*. And you will find, as use and custom hath strengthned these temptations, so an use of reflection and strenuous opposition, will at length weaken, and at last extinguish them.

SECT.

SECT. VII.

VII. THE last and great cure of Distractions, is, *strength of grace.* As no props without will keep the Ship steady, except there be store of ballast within; so no extrinsick helps will stablish your hearts against these wandrings without grace, yea strong grace within, Heb. 13. 19. *It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.* For,

1. The more sanctifying grace you have, the *more mortified* will your heart be unto the world, and the flesh, the great disturbers of divine Service. The fairest Landskip shewed to a dead man, moves him not at all. A heart dead to the world, is not removed from God with every trifle of the world, 2 Cor. 4. 18. *While we look not at things that are seen, but at things that are not seen.* Things visible are not worth looking at, especially when things invisible are in place. What's a temporal house, or land, or Children to me, that see, and am contracting for an eternal and glorious house and state? Alas! what taste is there in these rotten things?

2. The

2. The more grace, *the clearer* will be *your eye of faith*, to behold the Majeſty of God with whom you have to do, and the reality of the things about which you treat; for *faith is the evidence of things not ſeen*, and makes the ſoul as real as the body, and Heaven as real as the world, and the day of Judgment as real as the preſent day: And how undiſtractedly would a man pray, that ſaw the world on a flame, or himſelf dropping into another World?

3. The more grace, the *tenderer* will be *your Conſcience*; and ſo ſooner ſmart, and more oppoſe theſe enormities; the tender eye cannot bear, what the brawny hand can. A diſtraction in a duty more troubles a tender conſcience, than the total omiſſion of it doth another. A little ſin, is no little ſin, where there is a great deal of Grace. O keep your Conſcience tender, with all the care and skill you can. A little wedge makes way for a greater, and a little Thief can let a greater in. Bleſſed is the man that feareth alway, and *he that hath a ſoft heart is always hard to ſin.*

4. The more grace, the *more affections* to things above, Col. 3. 2. *Set your affections*

on

on things above, and where there is much affection, there is little distraction. A heavenly mind is all in all, *Isa.* 26. 8, 9. When the desire of the Soul is to the remembrance of God, when with thy Soul thou hast desired him in the night, then *with thy Spirit within thee*, thou wilt seek him early. He that hath his usual Conversation in Heaven, will not easily have his heart from thence in prayer. It's a clear case, where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. A mind above, will not so easily have thoughts below. Where is that man that can say, Psal. 119. 20. *My Soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy Judgments at all times?* He whose heart breaks for the presence of God, will break his heart, when he slips from him: And he that crys, O when shall I come and appear before God? will not privately wish, when shall I have done, and take leave of him?

5. The more grace, the *more disposed frame will the heart be in*, for the service of God: And it is indisposition to an Ordinance, that lets in distractions there; as an instrument out of tune, hath divers jarring strings, and still one or other slips, and spoils

ſpoils the melody: a diſtraction is a ſtring ſlipt that ſpoils the muſick, a tuned and diſpoſed heart would prevent it much. The Flock of ſheep that's indiſpoſed and unwilling to drive, ſtart out of the way into every Lanes end; one this way, and another that; and juſt ſo is it with an unwilling heart, one thought ſtarts this way, another that, and it's a piece of skill to drive them through. O but a willing heart, an heart prepared and ready to every good work, it flies up quite an end, and delights it ſelf in the Lord, *The Law of God is in his heart, none of his ſteps then ſhall ſlide.* Pſal. 37. 31.

6. The more Grace, the *more ſpiritual* and inviſible *ſins are obſerved* and reſiſted. Small grace diſcerns and mortifies the filthineſs of the fleſh; but ſtrong grace ſees and hates the filthineſs of the Spirit, and ſo perfects holineſs in the fear of God. Groſs ſins are left at firſt, but more refined ſins, ſpiritual wickedneſs in Heavenly imployments, theſe are work for riper graces afterwards. Hence the ſtrong Chriſtian uſually with eaſe, can avoid oppreſſion, cruelty, uncleanneſs, drunkenneſs, and the like; but the weak Chriſtian hardly Conquers Spi-

ritual pride, paſſion, unbelief, diſtractions, and ſuch like; a little mote more troubles the eye, than much dirt moleſts the hands; ſo an holy tender heart is more troubled with theſe undiſcerned ſins, than another man with greater crimes.

7. The more grace, *the ſtronger reſolutions* you will put on againſt them, and reſolution breaks the heart of them. The poor Country-man going to his Market; at every door in town almoſt, there is a ſnare laid for him; here one calls him in, and there another: but he reſolved in the morning not to ſpend a penny, and thereby he breaks through and avoids them all: Alas! his whole weeks earning had gone at a clap, and he ſhould have had nothing, but repentance to feed on, the week following: Even ſo, when thou comeſt into an holy Ordinance, the ſouls Market, where the ſoul hath much buſineſs; here one thought ſtands and beckens, and there lyes another, and at the door of every verſe and ſentence, a ſuggeſtion ſtands; but if thou haſt firmly reſolved at the beginning of the duty, by God's grace, I'll not ſtir from my God, from my work one jot, thou wilt not heed

nor

nor exchange a word with theſe vain follies: For alas! if thou ſhould'ſt, the whole gain of thy duty would be eaten up, and the end of thy duty, would be the beginning of thy grief.

8. The more grace, the *more buſineſs ye will find ye have to do with God* in his Ordinances; little grace hath little to do, and much grace hath much to do; he hath always buſineſs with God, ſpecial earneſt buſineſs, Pſal. 27. 4. *One thing have I deſired of the Lord—that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord*——and why? *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* O I have ſomewhat to inquire after, I am to do ſomething by this duty, and therefore cannot trifle. He that comes to viſit his friend in a complement, he talks, he walks, he trifles, and goes home again, but he that comes upon buſineſs, he is full of it: He is like *Abraham*'s honeſt and faithful Servant, Gen. 24. 33. *And there was meat ſet before him to eat, but he ſaid, I will not eat, till I have told mine errand.* I have great buſineſs with the Lord, about the Church, and about my Soul, and I will not eat, nor talk, nor think, nor dally about any thing, till

I have told mine Errand, or heard my Maker's errand unto me: And for this end, it's a rare thing to carry ſomewhat always on the ſpirit to ſpread before God, an heart pregnant with ſome needful requeſt, or matter whereof to treat with God, Pſal. 45. 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter*, and then, *my tongue ſhall be like the Pen of a ready Writer*; O then I ſhall go merrily on in his ſervice, when I have matter prepared in my heart. And indeed, as the Mariner ſees further new Stars, the further he ſails, he loſeth the ſight of the old ones, and diſcovers new; ſo the growing Chriſtian, the further he ſails in Religion, he diſcovers new wants; new Scriptures affect him, new tryals afflict him, new buſineſs he finds with God, and forgetting thoſe things that are behind, he reacheth after thoſe things that are before, and ſo finds every day new buſineſs with the Lord his God: and he that's buſie trifles not; the more buſineſs, the leſs diſtractions. And therefore be adviſed all ye that intend for Heaven, to get more grace. It is as much your duty to get the *ſecond grace*, as it was your duty to get the *firſt grace*; and as the want of this would damn you, ſo a want in that will diſpleaſe God, and that is as bad.

Queſt.

Queſt. But how ſhould a poor weak Chriſtian get ſtrong grace, if I can get any grace, it's well for me, a little grace is much for him, that had none at all.

Anſw. Though thou art a poor weak Chriſtian, yet that ſtrong and bleſſed God, whoſe thou art, *gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaſeth ſtrength*, Iſa. 40 29. And though it's well for thee to have any grace, yet it's better for thee to have more: few folks are contented with a naked life, but they would live well and comfortably, they would be healthful and plentiful, and will a little only of grace ſerve thy turn? And though a little grace be well for him that had none, yet it is not well for him that hath ſuch means and motives for much grace, as thou haſt had. And therefore I renew my counſel, if ever you would attend upon God, or injoy him hereafter without diſtraction, ſtrive for ſtronger grace. And to obtain it,

1. You muſt *be upright and humble*: Upright, for Job 17.9. *He that hath clean hands ſhall be ſtronger and ſtronger.* The ſound child grows, the child painted on the wall

thrives not: ſo the ſincere Chriſtian, he, though he feel it not, comes on, and goes from ſtrength to ſtrength, but the Hypocrite, he never grew, for he never had a root. And humble you muſt be. The humble vallies grow: God can never (he thinks) lay out too much upon an humble heart.

2. You muſt *manage the means of growth with your whole ſtrength.* Attend upon the moſt edifying Miniſtry, read the moſt profitable Books, conſort with the moſt lively growing Chriſtians, and particularly be frequent in the tryal of the ſtate of your Soul. Each week if poſſible, call your ſelves to ſome account, and ſtrive to diſcern a weekly growth; but if you cannot, deſiſt not from that work, but try again: Single out ſome ſpecial grace, or duty to thrive in next week; as for example, the Grace of Patience, ſaving Knowledge, the Duty of an Husband, Parent, or Child. And ſtill be trying, you will find one time or other, what will fully pay you for your labour: only obſerve, he that thrives in the World takes pains and care; and ſo in grace; he that will grow, muſt ſtrive and ſweat for it.

A little grace is worth a great deal of pains.

And thus you have the *Eighth Point*, to wit, the *Cure of Diſtractions*, if you will apply it; but to what end are Rules, unleſs you would be ruled by them? Theſe helps cannot help you, except you now faithfully put them in practice. The Plaiſter cures not in the Box, but laid on the ſore. And your charge be it if theſe do you no good. Review them then, and reſolve by divine grace to practiſe them every one, and *the Lord of Heaven give his Bleſſing.*

CHAP. IX.

Encouragements under the burthen of Distractions.

SECT. I.

BUT, lest any honest Christian should by his frequent distractions, be discouraged from his Duties, or in his Holy Duties; I shall in the *ninth place*, prevent such a Temptation, by laying down some Encouragements for those that groan under the burthen of Distractions. And here I assert two things.

1. That these Distractions should not *drive you from your duties*: You have been thinking, perhaps, it were better my service were undone, than done so confusedly; and our false hearts are secretly prone to accept any occasion to lay down our work, but believe not the Devil's rotten Divinity: he takes on him to be tender, lest God's name be taken in vain, but this is

is to inſnare you the more; but in this ſenſe, *obedience is better than ſacrifice*; thy obedience to his command, is more pleaſing to him, than thy torn ſacrifice. And then it is a known caſe, that the omiſſion of a duty will never fit one for a duty better. *Luther*'s ſaying herein, was, the more I neglect, the more unfit I am. Indeed, ſome ground will mend by lying ſtill, but that's better ground, than is in faln man's heart. Ours is the ground that muſt be ſtirred, and manured, and quickned, and then ſome fruit will come. As one ſin fits the heart for another, ſo one duty fits the ſoul for another. However, it's better to ſerve thy Maſter with a trembling hand, than not at all, and the Father takes well a well-intended work, though it be unwillingly marred in the making.

2. Theſe diſtractions ſhould not wholly *diſcourage you in the performance of your duties.* Diſpleaſe you they muſt, diſcourage you they muſt not. Our good Maſter would not have us draw heavily in his ſervice. It's propheſied, Pſal. 138. 5. *They ſhall ſing in the ways of the Lord.* This is a ſweet hearing. God's work goes beſt on,

when we ſing at it. All the infirmities of a Chriſtian laid together, yet ſhould not diſcourage him in his duty. *Si dixeris, doleo, ſufficit.* And for your ſupport, I lay down theſe incouragements.

I. *Diſtractions are conſiſtent with Grace.* Grace may live with them, but not be lively long with them: They are like the blew and yellow weeds, that grow with the beſt corn that is. Grace may live with them, though it can never agree with them: and therefore conclude not againſt thy ſelf, O I have no grace, I am ſo peſtered with theſe things: ſurely no child of God hath ſuch an heart. For this is an epidemick diſtemper; where ever the hand of God hath ſown good ſeed, the enemy hath ſcattered theſe his tares amongſt it. Indeed there is no ſin ſo crimſon, that is abſolutely inconſiſtent with grace, abate but that tranſcendent one, *the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*: Let no prophane heart make uſe hereof to hearten them in their ſins: a prophane heart, I ſay, for a gracious heart is of another temper. Alas! the worſt of ſins do ſometimes peep into the beſt mens hearts, yea may creep into them, and lodge in them for a ſeaſon. How much more may a ſudden thought

break in, which, like lightning, ſprings into the heart without any warning? Do not therefore cry out, when this or any other corruption ſteals into your hearts, I am a loſt man, this *cannot conſiſt* with grace, but this *ſhould not conſiſt* with grace. The former concluſion being made, dejects the ſpirits; but the latter whets the ſpirit to amendment. It was fooliſhly done of *Dinah*, *Gen.* 34. 1. To rove about to ſee the Daughters of the Land; it was not done like *Jacob*'s Daughter, but this was no argument for her to conclude, O I am not *Jacob*'s Daughter. So thou haſt an heart like *Dinah*, of a gadding temper, that runs abroad, and comes defiled home; this is not done like a ſanctified heart, but it were a ſimple concluſion to draw hence, certainly I am no child of God, I have no true grace at all. For alas, the ſweeteſt Roſe hath its prickles, the greateſt wits have a ſpice of madneſs, and the ſincereſt heart hath ſome vanity in it.

SECT.

SECT. II.

II. THE *ſecond* Incouragement is; *That your caſe is not ſingular.* Though the commonneſs of a Plague make it not the better, or leſs mortal, yet it ſhews that I am not alone miſerable: So, although this conſideration make not the ſin leſs heinous, yet it makes the affliction more tolerable. Poor ſoul! thou art not alone in thy complaints. Go to all the Saints in an Aſſembly, and they will all conclude, there is none hath a more giddy heart than they, and there's few at the end of an Ordinance would be pleaſed, that the reſt ſhould know the particulars of their ſtragling. Though charity binds us in particular to hope better of every one than of our ſelves, yet both God's Word, and common experience tell us in general, that the imaginations of the thoughts of men are evil continually. And there is none thinks themſelves ſo bad, but there are found others, that would be glad to change hearts with them: ſome

ſome indeed are nearer the cure of this diſeaſe, and do watch more narrowly, and ſo have obtained more freedom than others, but yet all are tainted with this infirmity; and every man being convicted by his own conſcience, will go out of the Congregation one by one, and there will not be a ſinleſs man to caſt a ſtone at thee.

SECT.

SECT. III.

THE *third* Incouragement is, *That Chriſt's Interceſſion for thee is without diſtraction.* There was fire always on the *Altar*, though the ſacrifices were intermitted. His interceſſion is continual, ours is interrupted. What unſpeakable comfort may a poor weak Chriſtian take in this? that *Chriſt Jeſus* is every moment, I ſay, *every moment* preſenting to the Father, the unanſwerable argument of his paſſion, for the impetrating and obtaining pardon, and grace, to help him in time of need. See *Heb.* 6. 20. *Heb.* 3. 25. Poor ſinner! thou art ſometimes ſo dead, that thou canſt not pray to purpoſe, ſo guilty thou dareſt hardly pray, and ſo diſtracted, thou thinkeſt thy prayers ſtand for nothing, yet be not diſcouraged, thy Mediator is ſick of none of theſe diſeaſes. The holy *Pſalmiſt* was ſometimes, as Pſal. 77. 4. *So troubled, that he could not ſpeak*; yet then had he one to ſpeak for him. The ſight of that precious glorified Son of God, doth infinitely

pleaſe

pleaſe and prevail with his Father for us, when we can hardly ſpeak good ſenſe for our ſelves.

I, but how can I tell that he intercedes for me?

Anſw. 1. Haſt thou a good word to ſpeak for him to men? then hath he a good word to ſpeak for thee to God.

And 2. Doſt thou ſigh, and groan, and ſpeak for thy ſelf as well as thou canſt, his interceſſion is to help our weakneſs, not to excuſe our lazineſs. If ſome ignorant poor man, that cannot ſay his errand, but is often out in his buſineſs, have a cordial friend (that hath the grace of ſpeaking, and the favour to be heard) undertake his buſineſs, he needs not be diſcouraged: ſo, though you have much ado, and be often *out* in your beſt reſolved duties, yet you have a friend in Court, that hath the Art of it, and the King's ear beſide, who ever liveth to make interceſſion for you, and therefore do your beſt, and never be diſcouraged.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

THE *Fourth* Incouragement is, *That diſtracted duties may keep you humble, when as your perfect performances might make you proud,* It is written of *Maſter Knox*, that on his death bed, after he had received many blows from Satan about his ſins, he was at laſt aſſaulted by him with this temptation, *viz.* That ſure God owed him a kindneſs for his upright and induſtrious labours, until that 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. was ſtrongly imprinted on him, *What haſt thou which thou haſt not received?* Perhaps the Lord fore-ſaw, that thy heart was ready to be fly-blown with pride, when thou doſt well, and therefore he ſuffers theſe diſtractions, like *Vultures* to gnaw upon thy heart, to keep thee humble. Far be it from you to draw from hence an occaſion to reſt more ſecurely in theſe ſins. That *Knight* was ſirnamed *Fortunate*, becauſe, being on a time in the deck of a ſhip, a great wave came and took him off into the Sea, and another wave took him and ſet him on the deck

deck of another ſhip; yet no man (I trow) would to obtain ſuch a Name, be content that a wave ſhould ſo hazard him: Even ſo, though God do ſometimes make uſe of our Infirmities to do us good, yet let no Man venture therefore to ſin, that Grace may abound. Becauſe the *Phyſician* can ſo temper Poyſon, that it may do thee good, wilt thou therefore venture to drink poiſon? It is miraculous wiſdom in God to do thee good hereby, and it were miraculous folly in thee *therefore* to venture upon evil. And with this caution, I proceed and obſerve, that it is a very hard thing to hear, or pray exactly without ſome tang of ſpiritual Pride after it: And to prevent this, God permits us to wander, and loſe our ſelves, leſt we ſhould be loſt; he ſees that it is ſafer for a man to fall into a leſſer evil, when he can turn it to a greater good, than to attain a leſſer good, and hazard to fall into a greater evil. O when a man ſees ſo much dregs in his very beſt duties, ſuch conſtant diſappointments, ſuch fooliſh impertinencies in his Heart, yea ſuch wicked contrivances in the very preſence of God, O then what a wretched man am I! ſurely I am more bruitiſh than any man, I am not worthy

worthy to come to thee, nor think I my ſelf worthy that thou ſhould'ſt come under my roof, no ſuch Sinner on Earth as I; my beſt is very bad, *&c.* Thus the Soul is throughly humbled, and brought to ſit among the chief of Sinners, and ſpiritual Pride rebuked.

The worſt Prayers we make (to our ſenſe) ſpeed ever beſt, and then we pray moſt happily, when we riſe moſt humbled, Dr. *Harris.*

SECT.

SECT. V.

THE *fifth* Incouragement is, *That our God can gather ſome ſenſe out of a diſtracted Duty*, and do us ſome good by it, *Rom.* 8. 27. *He that ſearcheth the Hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*, 'tis true of our Spirit as well as of God's. The great ſearcher of Hearts knows what you came pregnant with, what you meant, though you miſt it in the delivery. He can tell what was written in the Letter, though it did miſcarry, and will anſwer your godly meaning, and over-look your unwilling failing, *Pſalm* 103. 13. *As a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord* —— Why, the Child comes ſometimes full of a ſuit to the Father, and he is quite out in his Tale, has forgotten what he would have; but the Father knoweth what he wants, and what he would have ſaid, and grants the whole. And ſo, provided thou be a child, and art heartily ſenſible of thy wants, and comeſt panting to the Throne of Grace; thy heavenly Father will accept thy meaning, and grant thy Petition, though

though thy Heart did unwillingly give thee the ſlip, while thou mourneſt for it, and reſolveſt to mend it the next time. The induſtrious *Scholar* comes ſometimes full and clear in his leſſon, but when he is delivering it, he is out: Put him in his way; he is out again: Now, if his *Maſter* know, he had it perfect e'er he came, he pities and helps him, and concludes, that fear or care made him miſs it, and that his want is only in utterance, ſtrokes him on the head, and bids him labour to do better next time. So the ſerious Chriſtian, he is deeply ſenſible of his ſpiritual wants, and knows and feels well what he muſt ask, and down he kneels; but yet when he comes to open his caſe, alas! he's drawn away utterly againſt his mind, and his heart runs at random. Why now your heavenly Maſter knows your preparation, your intention, your indeavour, your grief, your reſolution, he will not turn off ſuch a Scholar. He is a Father, and will make the beſt of his child's faults, eſpecially ſeeing him fallen out with himſelf for them.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

THE *ſixth* Incouragement under the burden of Diſtractions, is, *That there is Grace and Strength in Jeſus Chriſt to help you againſt theſe your Diſtractions.* Without him we can do nothing to purpoſe; but that's a ſweet word, and a true, I can do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me, *Phil.* 4. 13. There is a ſtock in Chriſt's hand for ſuch needy Souls as you. You find your Grace inſufficient for you, but then his Grace is ſufficient. Lay the mouth of Faith then to the two Breaſts of his *Power* and *Pity*, and ſuck thence divine Strength, to help your humane weakneſs. How can that little Ciſtern be empty, that lies with a Conduit to the Ocean? How can that Wife be Poor, whoſe Husband is a Prince? How can that body languiſh, whoſe Head hath plenty of Spirits, and Power to convey them? why, he was anointed with the Oyl of Grace *above his Fellows*, but it was *for his Fellows*. He was rich for the Poors ſake; he was ſtrong for the weaks ſake.

Be

Be thou therefore ſtrong in the Grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus, 2 Tim. 2. 1. Your wound is not incurable, at this door others have ſped, and ſo may you. Wreſtle not therefore againſt theſe temptations, only in your own ſtrength. The Devil is too ſtrong for you alone, and the Heart too deceitful. Not I, but the Grace of God with me, ſaid *Paul* himſelf. If habitual Grace be too weak for them, auxiliary Grace is too ſtrong. Money in my Friends purſe, eſpecially in my Fathers is as good, as in my own, eſpecially when it is there *for me*. There never was ſeen a *Lazarus* lie dying at this Rich mans door for want. If there be any thing in Heaven to pleaſure you that fear him, you ſhall not go without it.

SECT.

SECT. VII.

THE *ſeventh* Incouragement is, *That in Heaven you will be perfectly rid of your Diſtractions.* There his Servants ſerve him without wandrings. Here you *would* ſerve him, there you ſhall ſerve him. Here we have the world to cumber and draw us off, there will be no other World but Heaven. Here the Devils ſtand at our right hand to reſiſt us, there he ſhall never come, nor once peep among the Saints above. Here our fleſh is continually ſuggeſting evil motions, or crying, *Maſter, ſpare thy ſelf*; but fleſh and blood ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, nor trouble us there. Here the crowding of *Gallants* diſtracts us in publick, and the crying of Children diſtracts us in private, but *ſupream Holineſs* will be all the *Gallantry* in Heaven, and no cries were ever heard above. Here one untuneable voice diſtracts us in the Pſalm; but there will be a perpetual Uniſon, and the eternal *Hallelujah* ſhall be ſung *nemine contraſonante.* Here this or

that

that buſineſs calls us away, invades us in the middle, and curtails us at the end, but there is no other buſineſs to go to, no Company to fetch you out, nothing that can give you ſuch content, no nor any content, out of that bleſſed employment. All the outward ſences, and all the inward faculties will be ſo wholly taken up with the viſion and fruition of the *Ever bleſſed Trinity*, that there will not be room for one by thought, or glance from that fair object to all eternity. O run apace, and you will be ſhortly there, diſpatch your work with all the ſpeed you can, fly with an holy haſte through all worldly buſineſs, caſt anchor at no worldly comfort till you diſcover Land, till your work be done, and your place in Heaven ready for you. And in the *Interim*, be not diſcouraged at your rovings, for you are not yet in Heaven. Perfection is reward as well as duty, and ſo is our aim here, but our attainment there: And let that happy ſtate be a Copy, by which you write your preſent duties. Think ſometimes when you are dull and roving, you ſaw a Caſement open into Heaven, and there beheld thoſe cœleſtial ſacrifices, and their divine imployment; and think withal, ſhortly ſhall I be among them, and do I pray here, as I would

ſing

sing yonder? doth this impertinent frame sort with yonder most blessed frame? why art thou cast down, O my Soul! I shall yet praise him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God. And this may be for incouragement to poor souls that are fainting under the burden of their distractions.

And now at last we see the shore, and so shall only lay on some binding sheaves, and drive away; and that will be by noting some Inference, from this Subject, which is the *Tenth*, and last point to be handled.

CHAP. X.

Inferences from this Doctrine.

SECT. I.

THE *first* Inference from this Doctrine and Subject, is, *That we have cauſe to mourn over our beſt duties*, and when we have written faireſt, to throw duſt thereon. Alas! what ſwarms of Flies corrupt our pot of ointment, and what a ſavour do theſe leave thereupon, in the noſtrils of God? we can hardly ever be buſie *within*, but vain thoughts ſend for us *without*. As our *Lord Jeſus* could not be about his great work, but they came with this diſturbance, *Yonder ſtand thy Mother and Brethren without, to ſpeak with thee:* So it is with us; the Devil and our hearts together, give us no quiet, when never ſo buſie, but will moleſt and cry, yonder is ſuch a buſineſs to ſpeak with thee, this Iron burns, and that work muſt be ordered. Alas! what broken and torn Sacrifices

crifices do we bring to our God? what a fair eſcape have we with our lives and ſenſes out of the preſence of God? As that *Emperour* killed the *Centinel* on the place, whom he found aſleep; ſaying, *Dead I found thee, and dead I leave thee.* So moſt juſtly might the Lord anſwer our *diſtracted duties*, with *diſtracting terrors*, and leave us under the judgement of diſtraction, for our ſins in diſtractions. And what a piece of ignorance and impudence is it, for any man to be proud of his Duties? Alas! the beſt duties are of divers colours, like the Beggar's Coat, and what Beggar will be proud of his patched Coat? If there were any flowers or ſpices in thy duties, they were none of thine, from thee came all the ſtench, from above came all the perfumes; and what poor reaſon then haſt thou to be proud? It is ſad, that when our ſins make us humble, our duties ſhould make us proud. Iſa. 64. 6. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy raggs, for there is none that ——ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of thee.* With what ſhame and trouble would we go among folks, if we had no better cloaths than filthy raggs? and yet how high we look, that have no better cloaths

of our own, upon our Souls? if you wear any better, they are borrowed garments, and what ſilly wretch is proud of borrowed Garments?

And this ſhews likewiſe, what need we have of the Righteouſneſs of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to make our prayers paſs into the holy place. It was the ſmoke of the Incenſe which came with the prayers of the Saints, and aſcended up before God out of the Angel's hand, *Rev.* 8. 4. The Prayers of the Saints themſelves, are like ſmoke in God's eyes (to ſpeak with reverence) but the ſmoke of the Incenſe is a perfume in God's noſtrils. *Jeſus Chriſt* can be heard when we cannot. Our quainteſt *Oratory* is broken and ineffectual. His interceſſion is conſtant and *Imperatory*. Go therefore to the Throne of Grace, *leaning on your Beloved*. Keep an actual eye to Chriſt's mediation in your Prayers, and though you bring in his precious name in the fagg end of your ſupplication, yet remember you have need of him in every ſentence; a broken Prayer had need of an intire Mediator.

SECT.

SECT. II.

II. IT follows hence, *That omiſſions of holy duties are extreamly dangerous.* Into theſe our *fall is moſt frequent*, againſt theſe our *watch is moſt careleſs*, after theſe our *mourning is moſt eaſie*: yet of theſe the number great, and the nature heinous. If according to that, Jer. 48. 10 *He be curſed that doth the work of the Lord negligently*, what is he that doth not God's work, one way, or other? If a *diſtraction* in prayer may damn, O what may an *Omiſſion* of prayer do! If the Scholar be whipt that looks off his book, what will become of him that plaid the Truant! Do the Conſciences of God's Children ſmite them for vain thoughts in a Duty, how ſhould yours wound you, that you have no thoughts of your duty! O you that omit ſecret Prayer, reading the Scripture, meditation, and ſuch like, will your negligence paſs with God? He ſees how ſeldom you ſigh in ſecret; what ſtrangers you are to prayers and tears: ſhould one in ſome caſes, refuſe marriage for fear of

distractions in God's service? and can you wholly omit his service without danger! Are watchfulness and seriousness such dispensable things, that they are happy that have them, but one may do well without them; I tell you; he that chastens his careless children, will punish his graceless servants. He that makes them smart for their distractions, will make you tremble for your omissions. Undone duty will undo your Souls. It's not enough that you have left off the language of swearing, unless you have learnt the language of praying. It's not enough that you have burnt your books of curious Arts, unless you love to read in the Book of Books, the Scripture. To be mortified to contemplative wickedness is well, but till you be vivified to contemplative holiness, it is not well enough. Do you must, or die you shall. You may come to Hell as certainly by *not climbing up, as by running down*; and lose Heaven by *Neutrality*, as well as by *Hostility*. When you have read the 25th *chap. of Matthew*, you shall tell me, whether wanting Oyl may not as truly ruine you, as drinking poison; whether an unprofitable servant will not come to a sad reckoning, as well as a prodigal Son.

Though

Though you take not anothers, yet you may be conſumed for not giving your own; and in fine, you will find that ſins of Omiſſion do deſerve damnation.

O hearken to this, all ye that live quietly, in the omiſſion of Cloſet or Family-prayer, of ſolemn faſting, or communion in the bleſſed Supper of the Lord. Hath God abated you of the price that others muſt give? hath he granted a new way to Heaven for you? muſt others make Religion their buſineſs, and you baulk it where you pleaſe? what can your Conſciences anſwer to that? *Jam.* 2. 10. *If a Man keep the whole Law,* (mark, the whole Law) *and yet offend* [*Gr. ſtumble*, ſtumble and ſtop] *at one point, he is guilty of all:* O beloved! there is a concatenation of Truths and Duties in Religion; you may eaſier go away with all your work than ſome; a negative holineſs will but bring you to a negative Heaven, and you know, behind Heaven-door is Hell. O awaken therefore your hearts, ye that ſtick at this point, that are far from debauchery, and exceſs any way, but will not be gotten to poſitive duties. Will ye with one daſh expunge the one half of Scripture! Is not

Good as amiable, as Evil is hateful? what cauſe is there to fear, that your avoidance of evil is from no good Principle, but either fear or ſhame, or intereſt, or at the beſt, a better temper? For the love or fear of God would make you cleave to that which is good, as well as abhor that which is evil, and to *do God's will*, as well as *deny your own*.

SECT.

SECT. III.

III. SEE hence *what grand necessity we have of watchfulness*; that most continual Duty of a Christian; this is the garment we must put on next us every day, especially in every duty. Between duties, that we may not want praying hearts; in duties, that we miss not prayer-blessings. Some duties bind always, but not to be always done, as Prayer, Hearing, Meditation, but you can be safe no where without your watch, at all times, in all places, with all companies, yea with no company, in all Callings; there is a snare for the heart every where. Wherefore saith the Prophet, *Hosea* 12. 6. *Wait on thy God continually*; and the Wise man, *Prov.* 23. 17. *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long*; especially, but not only in your Morning and Evening Sacrifices. It is a true and sad observation, that many praying People are most devout and serious in God's service Morning and Evening; but trace them all day long, hardly one word of God, or Heaven in their

mouths, as if Religion were hemmed up in times of Worſhip; nay, they are often moſt light and vain betwixt times: But be thou *IN* the fear of the Lord, involved, ſurrounded, and ſwallowed up in the ſenſe and fear of God's glorious preſence, all the day long. This will diſpoſe you to duties of Worſhip. A watchful Chriſtian hath his heart ready at a call: It is quickly in tune that was never out. Holy Duties are not Heterogeneous to an holy Heart, the ſame frame will ſerve. He that walks with God, is never out of his way. A ſhort, or rather no Preface, will ſerve to uſher in conference, with whom you have been converſing all the day. It is ſometimes the whole work of a Prayer to be acquainted with God. Away with this ſtrangeneſs; if you will be upright, walk before God, and watch unto Prayer. Methinks, ſincerity and watchfulneſs are the Catholick Graces. Sincerity makes every Grace true, watchfulneſs makes every Grace ſure. Of all Graces, ſtudy theſe Catholick Graces. Here is the eſſence, here is the quinteſſence of Religion. O therefore prize this Angelical, this Evangelical Grace, pray for it, *Pſalm* 141. 3.

141. 3. *Set a watch O Lord before my mouth, keep the door of my lips*; for except the Lord do keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain. Thou art impotent, God is omnipotent. And then practiſe it, the uſe of it will teach the Art of it; as Children learn to go ſtep by ſtep, as they learn to ſwim, by venturing. Adventure on this exerciſe, try one week, try one day, try one hour, try the next duty. As you renew your falls, ſtill renew your vows; you can do all things through Chriſt that will ſtrengthen you. I beſeech you in Chriſt's behalf, ſet on this duty in good earneſt. You will pay me for all my pains with one well-grounded reſolution, to ſet up a conſtant watch. What a ſad cloſe will that be unto your Life, to ſay, *Cant.* 1. 6. *My Mothers Children made me a keeper of the Vineyards, but MINE OWN VINEYARD have I not kept!* O therefore watch and pray, or elſe temptation will enter into you, and you will fall into temptation.

And moſt eſpecially in the ſervice of God. Watch and pray Chriſt hath joyned together, and what Chriſt hath joyned together, let no man, eſpecially

no

no good man put asunder. What is the first step in an Ordinance? (as the *Orator* of old in another case) watchfulness. What is the second step in an Ordinance? Watchfulness. What is the third step in an Ordinance? still Watchfulness. Particularly,

First, *In Prayer*, Prayer is a pouring out the heart unto the Lord; by a Distraction you pour it by, *Psal.* 62. 5. *My Soul, wait thou ONLY upon God, for my expectation is from him.* A distraction imposes two Masters on the Soul to wait on. Rovings in Prayer make that which is our most reasonable service, the most irrational thing in the World. No folly like speaking to one Person, and thinking of another.

Secondly, *In hearing Gods Word.* This is the audible conference of the Almighty with thy Soul. A Distraction lets him talk unto the Walls. When you come to a Sermon, you *stand on your Watch, and set your self on the Tower, and watch to see what God will say to you*, Hab. 2. 1. By a Distraction you do almost, as if a servant stopt his ears at the orders that his Master is giving.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *In reading.* Therein you peruse God's heart in black and white, where you may believe every Letter to be written in blood, not like *Draco*'s Laws, but in bleeding love. A distraction neither understands, nor applies those sacred Characters. Which of you would so read your Fathers last Will, especially in matters that concerned your selves? One Chapter, one Leaf, one Verse well read and applied, will do your Heart more good, than an hundred read with half an Heart.

Fourthly, *In singing Psalms*, you had need to watch. Thereby you pay unto God the Rent of his mercies. A distraction clips the coin, and turns the heart to do homage to the Devil. Well resolved therefore of *David*, *Psalm* 103. 1. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and ALL THAT I WITHIN ME praise his Holy Name.* Thy Melody is *base*, if the *main* strength of the Soul be not in it. I am perswaded that God hath suffered this Ordinance in particular to be slurr'd once and again, to be left off by some and cast off by others, out of his just Judgment, there being so general a neglect of the inward and feeling management thereof. For where

sits

ſits the man, that lets each word and line in the Pſalms runs through his heart as he ſings them? Nay, if the truth were known, there is hardly one paſſage, that is felt from the beginning to the end: for if it were, O the heavenly affections it would raiſe, and the ſweet frame it would leave on the ſoul! you would not part with that Ordinance out of your Families, nor Congregations, for all the World.

Fifthly, *In Meditation*, great need of watchfulneſs, elſe when the Soul is ſoaring aloft, like the Eagle, theſe darts will, or ever you are aware, ſtrike down the heart again. O how hard is it to ſpend a quarter of an hour in meditation without a diſtraction! If there be any thing in the fancy, if there be any thing in the room, if there be any thing in the World, thou wilt have it to withdraw thy Heart from God. And generally the more ſpiritual the duty, the more diſtractions. And therefore *I ſay unto you watch.*

SECT.

SECT. IV.

§. 4. IV. Reaſon to bleſs God for freedom from Diſtractions.

IV. SEE hence what cauſe you have to *bleſs God for freedom from Diſtractions*, and be ſure you do it. Thoſe that have an habitual ability againſt theſe ſnares, O bleſs the Lord for it! it is he that keeps the Heart in tune, not you. We like little Children, can break the ſtrings, and put our Hearts out of tune, but it is the Lord that ſets and keeps us in order. You little know the Anxiety, the fear, and trouble, that theſe do coſt many a poor Chriſtian; they ſtrive, they mourn, they doubt, they are ready to throw up all: Theſe Vultures do gnaw upon their very Hearts; no Comfort, no Joy of the Holy Ghoſt, no Peace within, and all through the continual aſſaults hereof. And by the only Mercy of God thou art well and free. Thou canſt continue inſtant in Prayer, thou canſt come to Heaven gates, and get thy errand heard, thy buſineſs diſpatcht, & little diſtraction

ction in it. O give the Lord praiſe, leſt he leave thee to thy ſelf, and then thy caſe will be more miſerable than theirs. Thankfulneſs keeps the mercy which ingratitude forfeits. And we are *Free-holders* of thoſe bleſſings, but 'tis becauſe we *hold them of his free grace* and mercy.

Yea, thoſe that are oft peſtered with them, and yet ſometimes freed, bleſs the Lord for that. It is as much your Duty to praiſe God when you are freed, as to bewail it when you failed. It is the compariſon of a good *Divine*; if a man have planted many Trees in his Orchard, and the Caterpillars, or Cankers have conſumed them all, but one or two, how glad will he be of them that are left, and make much of them? the reſt are kill'd, and theſe only remain. Even ſo thy duties of Religion, which thou haſt planted and expectedſt they ſhould bring thee ſome good fruit; but alas! theſe Caterpillars have conſumed them, unleſs it be here and there a prayer, here and there a Sermon, that have ſcap'd; O bleſs the Lord for theſe! you have often prayed for ſuch a mercy, now you have it: Let praiſes wear, what prayers have won. It is ſad

to

to conſider, what a beggarly ſpirit we are of: if we want any thing, Heaven and Earth ſhall ring of us; but we are graves, wherein the gifts of God are buried without any reſurrection. Where is the heart that is pregnant with praiſes, that crys out to his Friend, O help me to praiſe the Lord! Divide our lives, and the one half of them is mercies, and the other half is ſins: and yet divide our Prayers, and hardly the tenth part is ſpent in praiſes. Alas! thanks is a tacite begging. Let God gain the glory, and thou ſhalt not loſe the advantage. *The God of Iſrael is he that giveth ſtrength to his people, bleſſed be God, Pſal.* 68. 35. Conclude with the *Pſalmiſt*, Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy Name give glory. Think not, when thou haſt attended on the Lord without diſtractions, I have quit my ſelf well, but Mercy hath quit it ſelf well. He that juſtly pays his ſcore ſhall be truſted again.

SECT.

SECT. V.

V. YOU ſee here in the laſt place, *That Religion is an inward, a difficult, and a ſerious buſineſs,* Rom. 2. 28, 29. *He is not a Jew, that is one outwardly—— But he is a Jew, that is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the heart, in the ſpirit, and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men but of God.* To be watchful and holy within, that is a Chriſtian; to have the vanities of the heart cut off, that is Circumciſion; to carry it ſo in an Ordinance that you may be praiſed of God, that is Religion: while others are quarrelling about ſhadows in God's Ordinances, beware leſt you loſe the ſubſtance thereof.

There is in Religion a *Body* and a *Soul.* The Religion of the Body, is but the Body of Religion, the Religion of the Soul, is the Soul of Religion. And as the ſeparation of the Body and the Soul, is the death of a man; ſo the divorcing aſunder

aſunder the form and power of Godlineſs, is the death of Godlineſs. As it is injury to macerate and deſtroy the body for to cure and ſave the ſoul; ſo it is a crime to damn and loſe the ſoul, to pleaſe and pamper the body. Even ſo it is injurious to deſtroy the body and outſide of Religion, to preſerve and advance the ſoul and inſide of Religion; but it is heinous to loſe and break the heart of the inſide and vitals of Religion, to pamper and adorn the exteriours thereof. It is well, if while we quarrel about a *bended knee*, we do not loſe a *broken heart*. Is the folly of the *Quakers* criminal for killing Religion in her body? how ſinful then is *Formality*, that ſlays Religion on her ſoul!

And then you ſee here alſo, that Religion is a difficult and ſerious buſineſs; men cannot ſwim to Heaven in a ſtream of Roſe-water, nor row up this River while they are a ſleep: we cannot wreſtle with our God, with our hands in our pockets, nor get the bleſſing without ſweat and tears. To repeat ſo many *Pater-noſters*, or *Avemaries*, with the heart on other things, and running ſometimes from their knees to other buſineſs, in the midſt of their

their Devotion, as many do in the Church of *Rome* *; or to ſay our prayers, and be ſlumbring, or dreſſing us the while, as is the guiſe of many outſide Chriſtians, is far from our Religion. The *manner* of duties is *material* to the acceptation of them. Ah ſtupid worldlings! how can ye read thoſe Scriptures, Mat. 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,* Mat. 11. 12. *The Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,* and ſuch like, and yet hope for ſalvation in that ſecure and formal courſe you hold. Do you imagine, there are two ways to Heaven, one for the diligent mortified and watchful Chriſtian, and another for the idle ſluggard, or carnal worldling! Have the holieſt Saints much ado to walk with God, and get to him, that make it their buſineſs? they are ſaved, and that's all; and can you live and die well enough, that are neither mortified, nor

* Behold the Jeſuits Divinity. It is enough to be bodily preſent at the Maſs, though abſent as to the mind, provided he behave himſelf with a certain external Reverence. *Connick.* q. 83. a. 6. n. 197.

nor watchful, nor diligent, that have no delight, but in your vanities? no skill, but in the world? no diligence, but for your base ends? what back-way have you found to Heaven? what blind way have you descried to happiness? Awake, awake! look at the Scripture, and then look at your selves, and be convinced, that the only way to eternal happiness, is to make Christ your choice, Religion your business, the Scriptures your Rule, Heaven your design, the Saints your company, and the Ordinances your delight; and in them remember that you go to *attend upon the Lord*, and this must be done *without Distractions.*

And now you know your duty and your danger. The end of speculation is practice, and the end of our Preaching is not your approbation, but your submission. The Christian Religion is not so much the form of spiritual Notions, as the power of spiritual Motions. He that complements in God's service, will complement his soul into Hell. The outside of Religion may bring you to the outside of Heaven, but inside-holiness

neſs will conduct you into the inſide of happineſs. If theſe Directions I have given be but ſtudied and applied, as you would ſtudy and apply a Medicine for the Gout, or Stone, or but the Tooth-ach, I verily truſt they will prove the deſtruction of your diſtractions: But if they be neglected, your *diſtractions* will prove your *deſtruction*.

FINIS.

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